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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF WILDERNESS SOLITUDE

BY

ANNA-LOUISE RICHLEY

(C)

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS STUDIES

Edmonton, Alberta
SPRING 1992

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December 11, 1991

ABSTRACT

This thesis has undertaken to explore wilderness solitude from a phenomenological perspective. The intent was to gain a deeper understanding of the experience that a person has when in solitude in the wilderness, and the implications that this experience has for therapy. Four co-researchers entered a period of solitude for three days and three nights in a wilderness setting of their own choice. They were asked to describe their experiences in a written diary. The written protocols combined with information gathered during successive interviews formed the bulk of the data for mapping the phenomenological themes of wilderness solitude. A thematic analysis of each individual's experience was completed. This is followed by a discussion that centres on the common themes that weave the fabric of the shared experience, and explicate the essence of wilderness solitude. Findings indicate that self chosen solitude offers an environment where there is potential for personal growth, self-discovery, and renewal. In this wilderness solitude can be viewed as a therapeutic experience.

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CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

This study is inspired by my love for the outdoors combined with an insatiable quest for self knowing and a dedication to personal growth. Along with this, comes a deep felt commitment to seeking alternative methods of therapy, self-reflection and catharsis. My own interests and beliefs about wilderness solitude fuel my commitment to a truthful investigation in this area. Viewing the outdoors as a therapeutic environment, I intend to study the experience of being solitary in the wilderness, and the meaning that human beings assign to this particular phenomenon.

My search to understand the experience of solitude, particularly the experience that one has when in solitude in the wilderness, was an interesting journey. This quest of understanding and gathering the experiences of other people was followed by the task of articulation. The journal entries are part of the process of forming a picture of wilderness solitude. They are autobiographical, moulded by each person's being, experience and selective memory. They are also shaped again by my own interpretation and experiences. These descriptions of wilderness solitude are sometimes evocative of a precious and rarely experienced paradise. At other times, they speak of pain, loneliness and the confrontation of personal fears. It is true to say that in this case the journey has been as important as the destination.

A review of the existing literature on solitude led to the conclusion that there is little research in the area that speaks of the positive aspects of solitude and, the research that did exist in defence of its value, had not succeeded in explicating the essence or deeper

meaning of the phenomenon.

An investigation of the essence of wilderness solitude has not been addressed through formal research in the area of outdoor education. This fact, made the generation of information in an unexplored area one of my main objectives. The wilderness lends itself perfectly to a period of solitude; in turn, solitude is critical to the process of defining self. Wilderness solitude could therefore be seen as a discovery of self in nature.

Many people have little conception of the positive values of solitude. It is a state which, for the most part seems to be avoided at all costs. Kohak (1987, p. 35) spoke of our need to experience both solitude and communion in order to understand and appreciate each. "All beings need deeply the company of their kind. But as it takes darkness to understand the light, it takes solitude to realize how fundamental that need is."

The present work describes wilderness solitude as a therapeutic and accepting environment, and solitude as a powerful medium for personal growth, self-discovery and understanding. This thesis discovered a view of solitude as a time of self-confirmation that was intrinsically rewarding and therefore, had implications for healing.

Realizing that it is not enough to talk about silence and solitude, there has to be first hand experience to explore the depths fully. This thesis is therefore, the outcome of a process of experience, conversation and reflection, with the help of co-researchers.

Our conversations were shaped by the fact that we had all experienced the depths of solitude in a wilderness setting. We were all aware that the exploration of solitude would affect our

understandings of self and others. What we each quest for and search for during solitude does not exist until we find it. Each of the people whose solitude experiences are woven into this thesis made significant contributions to furthering understandings of themselves, and in helping to paint a picture of wilderness solitude with sufficient depth for it to be viewed clearly from the gallery.

Having completed a journey and reached some sort of destination, there are still echoes of my original question.... "what was it that led me so deeply into the wilderness alone, to explore the depths of myself..?"

The study sought to investigate and provide an authentic description of the experience of wilderness solitude. Specifically, the therapeutic elements of solitude were examined. The nature of the phenomenological approach, adopted for the study, was such that it permitted a very broad perspective of the experience as a whole.

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

Chapter Two is a review of the existing literature on solitude and research in related areas. The phenomenon of solitude has been of interest for centuries and has been explored in many different cultural contexts. This gives rise to a very diverse view, on both the value and the experience of solitude.

Chapter Three is a discussion of methodological choice. Natural science and human science approaches to research are contrasted. In addition, there is a discussion of the different philosophical propositions that each paradigm is rooted in. Continuing on from this discussion, an outline of three phenomenological methods are presented. Concluding the chapter is an evaluation of the phenomenological method with respect to

validity, reliability and generalizability.

Chapter Four is an in-depth explanation of the particular phenomenological method chosen for this study. Commencing with a rationale, the use of co-researchers and interview procedures are then discussed. Following this, is a bracketing of my own pre-dispositions and beliefs regarding the phenomenon. Data analysis is then described in the sequential order that it was handled.

Chapter Five explains the organization of the co-researchers protocols, then presents the findings from each. The data in this section were analysed according to the method described in Chapter Four. This chapter concludes with an across person analysis, this is a discussion of the themes that run as common threads through each of the co-researchers protocols. These themes form the essence of the experience of wilderness solitude.

Chapter Six addresses the need for qualitatively oriented research in this field, and suggests possible areas for further research, in addition to shortcomings of the present study. The impact the research has had, is followed by some concluding remarks on the potential practical implications of the findings.

CHAPTER II :
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

SYNOPTIC OVERVIEW

In the existing literature, there seems to be a lack of consensus about the experience of being in solitude. The phenomenon of solitude has had many meanings across cultures and throughout the centuries. The Eastern world holds a very different view of this phenomenon than the Western world. This is a broad and complex topic. To assist in making sense of the existing literature, the review will be organized as follows. First a review of the literature indicating the typical western societal view of solitude is discussed. This seemed a necessary starting point from which to present my case. The review then moves to an historical overview of solitude, and the different types of solo experiences that have been examined thus far. Research on loneliness, aloneness, isolation and privacy is then explored in-depth, as this provides valuable information about the significance of solitude. An examination of solitude throughout the life cycle is followed by a discussion of the healing potentials of solitude and its contributions to psychological well-being. The elements of the solo experience and the importance of finding a balance between communion and solitude are addressed. This precedes an examination of the research that investigates humans' capacity to be alone. Finally, existing perspectives and research, specifically in the area of wilderness solitude, will be reviewed, and the aims of the present research re-iterated.

ON REALIZING THE VALUE OF SOLITUDE

In Western society, it has been the traditionally held view that

solitude is pathological and not 'normal'. Emphasis is put on personal relationships as the wellspring of health and happiness and solitude is neglected. This can also be seen in the superficial level with which society deals with aloneness and solitude. Larson, Czikszentmihalyi, M., Graef, R. (1982), comment, "we are predisposed to think of aloneness as undesirable and as necessarily leading to loneliness. However, solitude can be a time of reflection, rest and self- renewal the opportunities available in solitude are deeply rooted in the sociocultural system to which an individual belongs" (p. 40). In this statement there is a recognition that solitude is viewed and valued differently in different societies and cultures. In Western society, we seem to have not yet realized the value of solitude within our culture, whereas in many other cultures it is a vital and important part of the maturation process, as in the Vision Quest that is undertaken in some Native American Indian tribes. Solitude may often be in the form of a religious retreat, for example Hindu sages or Trappist monks, for whom sometimes the retreat may be permanent. Without understanding the positive healing nature of solitude, people will continue to banish it from their lives and fill their lives with things, however meaningless, all in the name of avoiding being alone. We need to learn to listen silently and patiently to the inner voice through spending time alone.

Being alone for a considerable period of one's time is sometimes characterized as a sign or symptom of individual maladjustment; and sometimes as a condition that is the precursor and cause of pathology (Solomon & Patch, 1974; Werner, 1978).

That Western society has yet to see the value of solitude or embrace it as a healthy and acceptable behaviour, may have something to do with the fact that research on its positive effects is

still in its fetal stage. Being alone is always thought of as a painful experience that is damaging or due to the person's inability to relate to others. There are, however, small groups of people such as artists and theologians who view solitude as a gift and celebrate it as a unique opportunity to allow creative processes to surface, to reflect and ponder in the serenity that is offered by time alone.

Findings from a study done by Larson and Csikszentmihalyi (1977) indicated that time alone can be characterized exclusively as either renewal or loneliness. The positive aspects include an improvement of attention processes, better concentration and less self-consciousness. People reported higher moods after being alone, and a feeling of renewal. The possibilities for relaxation and reflection available in this niche result in an improved emotional state after one rejoins the company of others.

It would seem that if we are to change our attitudes about solitude and view it as a time where there could potentially be personal growth and greater understanding of self and others, the actual experience of constructive and positive accounts of time alone need to be brought more to the fore. This research is an attempt to start this process in motion. Wincott (1958) stated that, in order for a person to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by solitude, s/he must be able to turn a basically terrifying state of being into a productive one. In his mind, the issue may not be overcoming this loneliness, but being able to tolerate it. In my view, in just tolerating something there is no pleasure and no place for creative processes to work.

If I am just tolerating a situation, it is unlikely that this will be an environment that I will learn and grow in. For solitude to release its potential, there has to be a full embracing and acceptance of that

state in order for it to be a time of growth and furthered understandings.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SOLITUDE

Suedfeld (1982) reflected upon how the use of wilderness in such quests has characterized many cultures all over the world and has lasted several millenia. The outstanding religious innovators in world history whose major vision and communion with God occurred in wilderness settings include Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, and the Buddha. Many other mystics, monks, hermits, anchorites, mahatmas and prophets have followed in these footsteps. During the early centuries of Christianity, an estimated 5000 hermits were seeking solitude. In many societies, the contemplative or inspired individual who pursued enlightenment and insight far from the madding crowd has been honoured and held in high esteem. It is not uncommon among tribal cultures to incorporate a period of solitude in the life history of every individual.

Morgan (1986) offered a brief historical perspective of solitude. He views aloneness, stillness and quiet, as essential notions of solitude as well as important elements in a human life throughout the spiritual traditions of East and West. Silence and being alone in stillness are emphasized in the Hindu religious practices of Yoga and Buddhist meditation. The goal of satori in Zen points towards the value of stillness. Coming into harmony with Tao in Chinese religious thought, depends upon inner quiet and stilling the confusion of inner and outer voices. Traditions of shamanism found in North America, India, Africa and Australia emphasize solitude as the wellspring of the shaman's initiation into his or her sense of self. The Scriptures of the Judeo-Christian traditions have many

examples, experiences and instructions about aloneness.

It should not be forgotten that such practices are still in existence today. A three day and three night Vision Quest, as was undertaken by various groups of Native Americans, is offered as a personal growth and self discovery course by several commercial companies in the United States. Underhill (1961) was of the belief that wilderness solitude is an essential part of mystical education.

Merton spoke eloquently of solitude as a time to be with God, of this he said, "It is in silence, and not in communion, in solitude and not in crowds, that God best likes to reveal Himself most intimately to men" (1957, p. 38).

THE VARIETY OF SOLO EXPERIENCES

Suedfeld (1982) was of the belief that loneliness is a negative emotional state. He examined different types of solitary experiences and the positive aspects of these. He identified three categories of absolute isolation. The first is that of isolation in unusual circumstances, for example, solitary sailors, explorers or isolated prisoners. The second category is the solitude of religious and spiritual quests. The third category is comprised of evidence from research that has attempted to use isolation as a therapeutic technique in somatic and behavioural medicine. The data in this third category is more objective and quantitative than data from the first two categories.

Of the first category, Suedfeld believed that this type of solitude is often more of a survival experience than a time for contemplation and self searching. This is not to say that this does not occur during these types of solitude and that they are not meaningful, but survival is likely to be the primary concern. The second

category is that of those seeking solitude for spiritual quests.

LONELINESS AND ALONENESS

Research on loneliness provides valuable information about the significance of solitude. Mendelson (1986) reviewed Fromm-Reichman's (1959) article "Loneliness", in addition to examining contributions to the subject by other authors. He discussed aspects of loneliness stemming from character as well as from circumstance.

Mendelson provided useful clarification and distinction between terms that are used inter-changeably by using definitions from various works.

"Alone denotes isolation or solitude, and does not necessarily imply unhappiness. Loneliness adds to isolation the quality of painful consciousness that may accompany it" (American Heritage Dictionary, 1975, p.36).

Mendelson (1990) defined loneliness as "the state of unhappiness about, or complaint about solitude" (p. 339). He added that "to feel loneliness is to feel dejected over aloneness. The sense of aloneness usually implies loneliness." Liederman's view (1980, p.378), expressed that, "the term loneliness, denotes primarily a subjective affective state rather than, or even opposed to, an actual or objective state of aloneness. The essence of the sense of loneliness is highlighted when it occurs precisely in the presence of friends or inmates."

Auden & Krononberger (1981, p. 193) defined loneliness as "a condition of despondency, where one suffers from the want of an actual emotional connection, and where one yearns to have it otherwise."

Fromm-Reichman (1959) added further characteristics to the

experience of loneliness. "Loneliness has a different quality, more like sadness, dejection, feeling miserable: feelings akin to those found in states of depression. Loneliness also has a passive aspect."

Greene and Kaplan (1978) made an interesting distinction between loneliness and emptiness. Emptiness was equated with resignation and depression. They viewed the subjective state of loneliness as indicating a capacity to remember images of earlier attachments, and to hope for their restoration. Kohak (1984) offered a definition of loneliness differentiating it from solitude. "Loneliness is the condition of feeling abandoned amid an alien world, cut off from communication. Solitude is the condition of being alone in the presence of a living familiar world, willing to listen to it, to see and to understand it, sharing in its feel and meaning" (p.40).

Mijuskovic (1980) was of the belief that we all experience loneliness as boredom and continually feel that we must keep ourselves occupied lest we are forced to confront the 'nothingness' that is our consciousness. Thomas Wolfe (1933) a novelist said of the lonely person, "he senses a solution of the tragedy of loneliness in the fact that the lonely man is invariably the man who loves life dearly." Myer believes that no one escapes the experience of loneliness and that sooner or later it comes to us all. For many, life is a constant flight away from loneliness. The type of loneliness that interested Fromm-Reichman was not that which was culturally determined or caused by the loss of someone close, instead she was interested in that which was "non-constructive if not disintegrative and it shows in or leads ultimately to psychotic states." She found a strange fascination thinking about loneliness and trying to break through "the aloneness of thinking about loneliness" (Fromm-

Reichman, 1959, p.1). She also noted that a loss of reality or sense of world-catastrophe "can also be understood as expressions of profound loneliness". Fromm-Reichman noted that psychotic symptoms and personality disintegration could result from extreme cases of loneliness, yet at the same time she felt that she had not discovered what data would allow her to differentiate between those who could tolerate isolation without showing symptoms of psychotic loneliness and those who would not.

PSYCHIATRIC AND PSYCHOANALYTIC VIEWS

Freud did not directly address loneliness. He discussed humanity's efforts to avoid pain and one method of achieving that aim. "Voluntary loneliness, isolation from others, is the readiest safeguard against the unhappiness that may arise out of human relations" (1930). This addresses the value of regular periods of solitude and quiet.

Fromm-Reichman put forward the idea that severe loneliness is a major and insufficiently recognized factor in psychosis. She recognized that dependent attitudes play a big part in feelings of isolation. The excessive need for approval and reassurance for one's self esteem and sense of safety. "Grandiose and extractive expectations can turn minor occasions of solitude into major crises of unbearable misery" (1959). Mendelson (1990) concluded by saying,

> both connection and solitude being part of the human condition, each offers its pleasures and pains. A function of psychotherapy in this broader context, may be to free the person to discover the optimal mix for him of relatedness and solitude, and to cope self-respectingly with the sorrows that accompany solitude

and that attend connection (p. 345).

EXISTENTIAL ISOLATION

In Existentialism the fact that we all as human beings are ultimately alone, is a very profound thought and one which an individual must come to terms with. Aside from the fear of our own mortality, aloneness is the greatest anxiety that faces human beings. This aloneness is known as existential isolation. Yalom (1980) stated,

> individuals are often isolated from others and from parts of themselves, but underlying these splits is an even more basic isolation that belongs to existence in isolation that persists despite the most gratifying engagement with other individuals and despite consummate self knowledge and integration. Existential isolation refers to an un-bridgeable gulf between oneself and any other being (p. 355).

Yalom believes that people who have little inner strength and who fail to develop feelings of self worth will struggle when facing existential isolation. These people, Fromm-Reichman (1959) refers to as having "dependent attitudes", are in a constant battle to avoid coming face to face with their inexorable aloneness. These individuals search for meaningful ways to avoid isolation and solitude. This may take the form of dependent relationships or total immersion of the self in some individual, cause or pursuit that often turn out to be just escapes. Solitude, it would seem, cannot be tolerated by all people. "The individual who needs the affirmation of others to feel alive must avoid being alone. True solitude comes too close to the anxiety of existential isolation, and the neurotic individual avoids it at all costs; isolated space is peopled with others; isolated time is extinguished with business" (Yalom, 1980, p. 376).

Yalom adds that "it is rare for the individual in the Western world to simply be with himself or herself and to experience, rather than dispatch time." Solitude can be viewed as a unique opportunity to come to terms with our aloneness and to embrace it rather than denying it.

LONELINESS AND PRIVACY

Larson (1990) defines solitude and differentiates it from loneliness and privacy. Solitude is the objective condition of being alone, defined by communicative separation from others. By contrast, loneliness and privacy are subjective conditions, which may or may not co-occur with being alone. Loneliness is a psychological state, a felt need for the presence of others (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). Privacy is most often defined as the process whereby people regulate the information about themselves that is available to others (Altman, 1975, 1977; Derlegan & Chaikin, 1977; Foddy & Finighan, 1980).

From the findings of Peplau & Perlman (1982) and Weiss (1973), Larson (1990) hypothesized that a solitary lifestyle is related with poorer well being. Peplau & Perlman (1979), suggested that each person has an optimal balance between social engagement and solitude. Westin (1967) has suggested that solitude may provide an emotionally valuable release from the pressures of social roles and a special opportunity for self evaluation and the integration of personal experience. Suedfeld (1974, 1980, 1982) proposed that time alone can be psychologically instrumental for maintenance of the self, for "healing" and for self transcendence.

Some research noted that people may be more creative or engage in more primary process thinking when they are alone

(Arieti, 1976; Bush; 1969; Zubek, 1973). "By freeing attention from social participation and self-monitoring, solitude provides a situation suited to deep absorption."

According to research findings (Larson et al.,1982, p.165), "after being alone and returning to the company of others, respondents felt more alert and cheerful than at other times they were with other people." Altman(1975) and Westin (1967) evidenced that daily solitude serves the function of self restoration.

SOLITUDE THROUGHOUT THE LIFE CYCLE AND ACROSS CULTURES

Fromm in his book The Art of Loving wrote that "the ability to be alone is the condition for the ability to love." Along similar lines Moustakas (1961), in his essay on loneliness, stated, "The individual in being lonely, if let be, will realize himself in loneliness and create a bond or sense of fundamental relatedness with others. Loneliness rather than separating the individual or causing a break or division of self, expands the individuals wholeness, perceptiveness, sensitivity and humanity." Storr (1988) also addresses the matter of the ability to be alone in his book Solitude.

Larson (1990) was aware that from childhood to old age, people spend increasing amounts of their waking hours alone. He examined daily solitude as a "distinct experiential niche". His findings show that people's daily experiences of solitude are usually ones of loneliness and passivity.

Downs and Erikson, (1972, 1950) were of the belief that periods of solitude, whether brief moments or extended seclusions, have a range of functions and meanings in the human life cycle. Youth in many Native American cultures were required to pass a

period of time in seclusion to mark the transition from childhood to adulthood.

In the Hindu life course, elders withdraw from social intercourse to pursue spiritual ends (Hiebert, 1981). In our society, numerous artists, scholars and scientists, have found solitude essential to their work (Arieti,1976; Bush, 1969; Middleton, 1939; Storr, 1988); and poets and philosophers extol periodic solitude as an opportunity for self renewal (Suedfeld, 1974, 1982). At the same time however, spending too much time alone is a defining symptom of depression (American Psychiatric Association,1987), and forced solitary confinement is often experienced as one of the worst possible punishments (Suedfeld, 1974).

Solitude is a separation from others, a separation from immediate participation in the social activities of talking, sharing and, loving. As such, it has the potential to harbour a wide range of extranormative thoughts and feelings, including generative and self-nurturant activities, as well as those that may be harmful to the individual or community.

SOLITUDE AS A HEALING EXPERIENCE

Suedfeld (1982) accentuated the positive aspects of solitude. He believed that positive experiences during solitude are both beneficial and pleasant; and that these experiences may have a healing effect. Aloneness in this context fills a need, removes a lack and impels growth. During this type of solitude there seems to be no loneliness; rather the individual feels a freedom from distraction, and from the usual restrictions imposed by social norms. External stimulation is reduced to the point where the internal voices can be heard.

Suedfeld examined the therapeutic possibilities that solitude offers. He also discussed an isolation therapy technique called, "Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy." Not unlike the solitary quest, solitary therapy has a long history. The use of isolation and stimulus reduction in the treatment of the mentally ill have been noted as far back as the oracles of ancient Greece and are still used today, north to the Arctic Circle and south to sub-Saharan Africa.

Solitude has played a part that has never been abandoned by the tradition of scientific medicine as we know it. Psychiatric pioneers such as Rush, Mitchell, and Janet all recognized that overstimulation could be pathogenic, and prescribed rest and freedom from social intercourse for a variety of behavioural syndromes (Dercum, 1917). In Japan, Morita and others combined these ideas with traditions inherited from Zen Buddhism to develop therapeutic systems that are in wide current use (Reynolds, 1976). Early uses of isolation as a calming environment saw the seclusion of patients in mental hospitals, to reduce aggressive and otherwise violent behaviours. A similar application can be seen with agitated inmates in institutions that span the borders of mental health care and incarceration, for example, facilities for mentally disturbed juvenile or adult offenders.

Recently has seen the adoption of reduced stimulation techniques in the treatment of psychiatric patients. Not only has social isolation been found as a viable treatment but, sensory restriction has also been used. The boundaries of these innovative techniques have not yet been explored. "The use of solitude in the treatment of disturbed children has resulted in major symptom remission in cases of autism (Schachter et al.., 1969) and in

improved learning and decrease in disruptive behaviour among retarded and delinquent children and adolescents." These findings show the degree to which solitude plays a role in the environmental and sensory restriction used to treat disturbed patients. It seems that solitude has implications in the healing of such disorders. "No one would deny that loneliness can hurt. But it is equally certain that aloneness can heal. And solitude, properly structured, may even be used to heal and transcend loneliness, and to use it as a springboard for enjoyment, health, and growth"(Glynn, 1957, p. 65).

SOLITUDE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

According to Larson (1980), there is very little evidence to suggest that solitude is useful to psychological health. An exception to this are various Japanese therapies in which solitude is a deliberate part of the therapeutic regime. Spending large amounts of time alone is more often associated with poor adjustment and social alienation, rather than contributing to psychological well-being.

Wincott (1958) proposed that psychological health in adulthood requires an ability to be separate from others yet maintain "ego-relatedness", to be alone without succumbing to impulse, loneliness, or fear. The capacity to be alone, he argues, is "one of the most important signs of maturity in emotional development" (p. 416).

Erikson (1968) identified that "solitude is an important task in identity formation." In many traditional societies, youth achieve their status as adults only through a period of solitude in which they search for a personal sign or vision (Erikson, 1968; Suedfeld, 1974, 1980). The experience of greater concentration and freedom from the influence of others in solitude provide favourable conditions

when questing for visions.

Larson concluded that "solitude is only a step back from social immersion, from the immediate support, scrutiny, and demands of others" (1990, p.175). Across the life-span, too much time apart from others is correlated with loneliness, depression, and psychiatric disorder. At the same time, the freedom from social regulation provided by solitude presents an opportunity to concentrate deeply and feel less self-conscious. It is fair to hypothesize that solitude may have value as an occasion for self-nurturant thoughts and for identity development. Also, for the same reasons, we might expect solitude to be valuable for adults going through life changes that involve self-redefinition-divorce, widowhood or career change. In the flux of these transitions, opportunities to be alone might be hypothesized to provide a chance to explore personal feelings and escape from the roles people expect you to play.

Larson (1990) hypothesized that "after adolescence it is not the quantity of solitude that is significant to a person's wellbeing, but the quality: the capacity to tolerate the loneliness of separation from others and make use of the constructive potentials of solitude" (p.177).

Larson (1990) noted that the degree to which solitude is voluntary is an important concern. Simply he predicted, that involuntary time alone would be lonely and alienating while voluntary solitude would be constructive and healthy.

Morgan (1986) explored solitude as a helpful environment for spiritual and psychological health. He addressed some important elements of the experience of solitude as well as defining some of its characteristics and purposes. Morgan pointed out that in making room for experiences of solitude, it will help one to properly order

oneself and one's relationships.

On the experience of solitude, he stated "solitude is a chance to be with oneself, really to be with oneself in all one's complexity. It is a choice to be with one's Self, open and available for what emerges and discloses itself in quiet" (Morgan, 1986, p.19).

SOLITUDE AS A CURE FOR LONELINESS

Erazim Kohak (1987), viewed wilderness solitude as one of the gifts of humanity. Kohak's book is a philosophical meditation on the moral sense of nature. Kohak stated (1987, p. 34) that "for most of us, even to think of solitude as a gift requires an effort. We fear solitude no less than we fear darkness, and have striven no less seriously to banish it from our lives...solitude is the great liberating gift from which philosophy can be born, not as a way of seeming, but as a way of truth."

ELEMENTS OF THE SOLO EXPERIENCE

Morgan (1986) gave a very clear description of the elements of solitude.

> Firstly, solitude appears to be a state or condition of the person at rest. It is more than simply being alone. It is a particular mode of aloneness. Solitude is an ambience of stillness and quiet. It is a way-of-being, a quality of self-in-world, a moment of attentiveness and presence. Second, some element of choice seems to be involved. In genuine solitude one willingly turns towards the quiet and allows oneself to be grasped by it. Third, a recollection occurs. One senses investments of energy and parts of the self being

> withdrawn from outer concerns and activities and brought into a kind of unity. One becomes present and available for oneself. Fourth, this quiet and unifying moment gives rise to an emergence from something deep within, something sensed as grounding the person as a whole. The Self, as seat of that which is peculiarly and irrevocably Me, emerges to the fore. And fifth, with that emergence comes the feeling of integration and wholeness that both energizes and focuses the person (p. 20).

Morgan (1986) offered a working definition of the experience of solitude. He believed that solitude is a willing acceptance of the dynamism toward wholeness. This presupposes that there is tension felt within the individual who does not allow him or herself time alone followed by an invitation from the self to grow and be whole. That is to say that we as human beings, naturally and dynamically move towards greater health and harmony.

Morgan viewed solitude as a time when there is encounter between ego and self. This dialogic struggle he believes, facilitates wholeness within a person, rather than a one-sided emphasis on ego.

Steere (1982) saw solitude as a method to help restore in us an interior space that is meant to be there. Steere was of the opinion that solitude brings one to the very core of being, where one is beyond the grip of the surface self with all of its plans and distractions.

Merton (1973) understood solitude as freeing the person from plans, distractions, and myths, and engaging one on the quest for deep personal authenticity. Karl Rahner (1974) viewed genuine solitude as the milieu for true self-acceptance and the birth of "a

heart aware of itself." Nouwen (1981) was of the belief that solitude was the furnace of transformation. Without solitude we remain victims of our society and continue to be entangled in the illusions of the false self. Solitude is the place of the great struggle and the great encounter, the struggle against the compulsions of the false self, and the encounter with the loving God who offers himself as the substance of the new self.

Morgan (1986) emphasized the importance of choosing solitude rather than forcing oneself out of guilt or a sense of ought. He believes that an experience of solitude that is forced would cloud and ultimately destroy it. Morgan concluded his article by stating, "the taste for solitude, once fostered through discipline, now becomes more a hunger in its own right, as a person slowly learns that solitariness is the ambience for the life-giving processes of self-hood" (1986, p. 27).

ADDRESSING THE BALANCE OF COMMUNION AND SOLITUDE

Kohak recognized the need for humans to find a balance of communion and solitude so that both can be understood and appreciated. Kohak questions the typical western view of solitude and illustrates how we have kept it from our lives.

> In our deeply ingrained prereflective image of reality, solitude has indeed become synonymous with loneliness, the state of being cut off from all that supports us and sustains us, alone in an alien world. Having conceived of that world as dead matter, we think of other humans as the only possible companions. Then stepping out of the intersubjective monad of our

> human community, even for a passing moment, appears to us to constitute being alone. We fear solitude: in a curious inversion, we tend to suspect pathological motives in those who choose it, prescribing crowds as a cure in the boundary situations in which humans through the ages had diagnosed a need for solitude (p. 37).

Kohak then continued to offer some thought provoking ideas on solitude as perhaps a cure for loneliness, and views solitude as a time to help teach us openness and receptivity to others.

> Loneliness, the loss of solitude, is the price we pay. Yet solitude need not be loneliness: it can also be the cure of loneliness. It is not a matter of "learning to live without others," but rather of learning to live with nature and others, not outshouting them with our insistent presence, but being instead ready to see and hear, in love and respect. For, in understanding as in sense perception, it is when we stop speaking that we begin to hear....as solitude dissolves the opacity of our collective monad and the dusk lights up the moral sense of life, humans can begin to see (Kohak, 1972,p. 40).

Moustakas (1961) expressed the importance of being alone to rediscover life in oneself and the world.

> One cannot be sensitive without knowing loneliness. To see this is to be lonely - to hear, feel, touch - every vital, solitary experience of the senses is a lonely one. Anyone who senses with a wide range of delicate feelings and meanings, experiences loneliness. To be open to life in an authentic sense is to be lonely, for in

> such openness one hears and feels and senses beyond the ordinary. Through loneliness we are refined and sensitized and open to life's lofty ideals and influences. We are enabled to grow in awareness, in understanding, in aesthetic capabilities, in human relations (p. 101).

Moustakas (1977) wrote about silence and solitude as being integral parts of creative discovery. In searching for a process that encourages, affirms, and supports the growth of individuality, he always arrived at the same conviction. This being that the primary source of creativity is the individual self. He saw that within the self of each person there are potentials for new awareness, for discovery, and for creation of life. These sources of growth he believed to be evoked or activated in times of silence, meditation, self-communion, and self-dialogue. He was also of the belief that self growth begins with an attitude, a receptiveness, a willingness to go wide open, to see what there is, to hear and feel all that is available, and know what is within self and before self.

Moustakas felt that creating solitude is essential in opening up awareness and allowing a self dialogue to take place. In this process new perspectives arise and there is a clearer recognition of self. Moustakas (1977) suggested that loneliness exists in two basic forms:

> the loneliness of solitude, which is a peaceful state of being alone with the ultimate mystery of life, people, nature, the universe, the harmony and wholeness of existence; and the loneliness of a broken life, a life suddenly shattered by betrayal, deceit, reflection, gross misunderstanding, pain, separation, illness, death, tragedy, and crisis that severely alter not only one's

> sense of self but the world in which one lives, one's relationships, and one's work projects(p. 98).

Moustakas (1977) recognized that the loneliness of solitude is qualitatively different to the tragic type of loneliness that is mentioned earlier. He states "a different kind of loneliness occurs during periods of serenity and well-being. In encounters with nature and universal attractions and in relations with one's own self, loneliness may be experienced as an awakening, an awareness of beauty, and grandeur, and wonder, and grace" (p. 98). Moustakas noticed that "we have come a long way in understanding that loneliness is potentially an opening, a beginning, a process that awakens, encourages, and enables us to experience hope again and to take the first step in active creation of new life" (p. 100). His belief is that silence is at the heart of this process and that we need to respect the silence for it has something to offer each of us. For Moustakas, "life flows when silence is welcomed" (p. 101).

THE CAPACITY TO BE ALONE

Wincott (1969) commented that,

> it is probably true to say that in psycho-analytical literature more has been written on the fear of being alone or the wish to be alone than on the ability to be alone... it would seem to me that a discussion on the positive aspects of the capacity to be alone is overdue (p. 29).

Storr (1988) wrote from an essentially Jungian perspective. He believed that the real self is discovered in solitude. Storr (1988) viewed solitude as the absence briefly or extendedly, of a friend or companion, by choice or by circumstance. It may be endured, or

even preferred and sought, for specific occasions or needs, such as contemplation or creative work.

Storr (1988, p. xiii) argued for solitude as a means for satisfaction and fulfilment, in contrast to love and friendship which he believed are of course, an important part of what makes life worthwhile, but they are not the only source of happiness. He believed that in old age, human relationships often become less important, and thought that this was perhaps a beneficent arrangement of Nature, designed to ensure that the inevitable parting of loved ones will be less distressing. He also witnessed that there is always an element of uncertainty in interpersonal relationships which should preclude them from being idealized as an absolute or seen as constituting the only path towards personal fulfilment.

Storr addressed the capacity to be alone as an important element in the ability of an individual to tolerate and enjoy solitude. Wincott (1958) postulated that the capacity to be alone is developed when the person is an infant. Throughout a person's life many types of experience go to the establishment of the capacity to be alone.

The experience of being alone, as an infant and small child, in the presence of mother is the basis of the capacity to be alone. Without a sufficiency of it, the capacity to be alone does not come about, is a paradox, it is the ability to be alone while someone else is present.

Storr (1988) elaborates on the value of having the capacity to be alone.

> The capacity to be alone thus becomes linked with self-discovery and self-realization; with becoming aware of one's deepest needs, feelings, and impulses... we have seen that the capacity to be alone is a valuable

> resource. It enables men and women to get in touch with their deepest feelings; to come to terms with loss; to sort out their ideas; to change attitudes. In some instances, even the enforced isolation of prison may encourage the growth of the creative imagination (p. 21, 62).

In acknowledging that solitude may enhance creativity and allow people to get in touch with themselves, Storr (1988) also recognized that solitude can be damaging or rewarding according to the circumstances.

WILDERNESS SOLITUDE

A review of the research literature indicates that little study has been directed to answering the question: what is the experience of being solitary in the wilderness? However, some studies have attempted to describe the implications for such an experience and how to better facilitate the solo experience so that it is meaningful for participants.

Hammit (1982) researched the cognitive dimensions of wilderness solitude. He attempted to develop a cognitive and information processing theoretical framework for investigating the meaning of wilderness solitude. Hammit defined wilderness solitude as a form of privacy in a specific environmental setting where individuals experience an acceptable degree of control and choice over the amount and type of information they must process. He uses the two underlined phrases to differentiate wilderness solitude from other types of solitude. This empirical study does not offer any insights into the meaning that the experience has for the soloist nor does it attempt to describe the essence of the solo experience.

McIntosh's (1989) article "Re-thinking the Solo Experience",

was written based on his experience of working with young offenders. His view of the solo and its potential use as an opportunity for young offenders to reflect is discussed. Solo, in this context, is to help young individuals grow through a period of solitude and reflection. The solo experience is very closely monitored and facilitated. McIntosh (1970) stated that, Outward Bound schools initially viewed solo as a survival experience and, programs in the 1970's began stressing that solos were also a time for reflection. Gradually, the potential of the solo experience as an undeniable opportunity for personal growth and self reflection became more apparent.

Hodder, Waligun and Willard, (1986) noted that solos are not so successful with youth who are action oriented, rather than reflective. McIntosh emphasized the importance of pre-solo activities to help prepare the student for different aspects of the solo. He believed that this generally resulted in a reduced anxiety about the solo. All of McIntosh's comments were, however, only based on his experience with young offenders.

Katz (1973) started his exploration of the solo experience by looking at the historical roots of the activity. He, like many others, discovered that solitude has been a critical aspect of individual development and societal functioning. A period of solitude during adolescence is very often a rite of passage or an initiation rite. Katz believed that the solo experience could lead towards personal growth. He also believed that existing in solitude, one's sense of space, time, self, and the subject-object distinction changes significantly.

Morrison (1986) explored the solo from a phenomenological perspective. The main focus was on the value of solitude as a

therapeutic experience. Through this study, Morrison found several common themes in the solo experiences of her co-researchers. These themes included, change in time perspectives, freedom from distractions: simplicity, attunement to natural rhythms, freedom of expression, attunement to senses and nature, sense of pride, appreciation of relationships and humour. My study is not unlike that of Morrison's in that we both have explored wilderness solitude from a phenomenological perspective. This raises the question of reliability. In natural science research, if controls are adequate, replication should yield the same results. In phenomenological research however, if researcher bias is minimized, the replication should yield similar, but not necessarily identical results. It should also be remembered that phenomenological results are not generalization in the usual sense of the term, since the method does not involve random sampling and statistical analysis. Phenomenological results could be considered generalizable to the extent that they are shared by other people.

INTEGRATIVE SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Solitude is a subject that is both broad and complex. The review of literature has therefore taken a multi-perspectival look at the existing viewpoints on solitude and other related areas. Examining the literature from historical and cross-cultural perspectives was useful in helping to formulate a picture of the evolotion of Western societal views and beliefs about solitude. This also provided cultural and historical insight into the meanings of solitude. An examination of solitude throughout the lifecycle allowed me to map the amount of time people spend alone throughout their lives. It became apparent that with increasing age,

people spend greater amounts of time alone. Larson (1990) found that people's daily experiences of solitude were not seen in a positive light, but rather were times of loneliness and passivity. Larson also noted that there is very little evidence to suggest that solitude is useful to psychological health. Contrary to this, authors such as Suedfeld (1974) examined the therapeutic potentials of solitude. In this research, certain types of solitude are viewed as a healing experience, for example, certain psychiatric practices in both England and Japan.

Synthesizing the viewpoints addressed, led to the recognition that further research which examines the positive aspects of solitude is needed This study will attempt to expand what Morgan (1986) has said about the experience of solitude and, to further illustrate it as a potentially therapeutic experience.

CHAPTER III:
METHODOLOGICAL CHOICE
NATURAL SCIENCE OF HUMAN SCIENCE , DICHOTOMY OR RECIPROCITY ?

I was faced with the choice of an appropriate method which will address the essence of the question posed. In selecting the method that best answers a question relating to a particular phenomenon, the primary concern of the researcher should be careful reflection on the nature of the question s/he wants to explore.

Many areas of human life and experiences of being fully human resist quantification, for example, love, hate and compassion. I believe the experience that a human being has when alone in a wilderness place for three days and three nights can be best captured in the words of that person, and not through a pictogram, graph or complex statistical analysis. The aim of positivist research, to achieve reliability that is predictable and replicative consistency, is in my own mind inappropriate when dealing with human beings as unique individuals. Stigliano (1986) comments that "human life is too complex to be reduced to a set of variables regressing to a mean" (p.81).

This chapter will begin by contrasting natural science and human science. Reasons for adopting a human science approach and, within that framework, phenomenology as the methodological choice for this thesis will also be addressed. The particular phenomenological method chosen will be described, and then appraised in terms of validity, reliability and generalizability.

PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF NATURAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Natural science and human science are two different ways of viewing the world. The dichotomy revolves around how one experiences the world that we live in. Natural science uses quantitative experimental methodologies to formulate theories about the nature of things. The tools used include logic, rationality and controlled observation of the phenomenon under study. Natural science is a more abstract, once removed, distant look at an original experience. Observation is employed to order and structure. Then, statistics are used to manipulate data and to examine relationships between theory and observation. This type of research examines the extent to which empirical observations, support the theory, using statistical calculations. Natural scientists strive to establish scientific detachment and emphasize the scientists efforts to conduct value free research.

The main assumption of natural science is that most questions concerning human behaviour are responsive to measurement. Human behaviour is therefore, divided into manageable units or constructs. Ideas or questions generate testable hypotheses. This type of research is usually conducted under laboratory conditions, in order to minimize researcher bias and external influences.

Essentially the approach of psychology, when conceived of as a natural science, has been characterized as being: empirical, positivistic, reductionistic, analytic, predictive, quantitative and objectively analyzed for cause and effect relationships by an independent observer, (Giorgi, 1970). This type of research also views human behaviour as mechanistic, quantifiable and causally determined.

PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF HUMAN SCIENCE RESEARCH

There are certain human experiences that cannot meaningfully be expressed by numbers, hence the development of human science that has a more 'humane' approach to research. The human science movement is rooted in the Kantian philosophy. This tradition leans more towards idealization and abstraction than natural science. Human science or qualitative research espouses an ontology which encompasses meaning and purposiveness that also emphasizes the historical and cultural context of human action.

Kant believed that sense impressions would be unintelligible were it not for the mind's capacity to organise them in a meaningful way. He proposed the existence of the noumenal and phenomenal world. The noumenal world refers to things that underlie our experience of both the physical world and our own mental states, the primordial world. The phenomenal world is our fresh and un-contaminated experience, the prereflective state at the root of human consciousness.

Human science allows for dialectical reasoning and always allows for the possibility of an alternative. The research process is multidirectional and works towards synthesis. "The attitude of the researcher is one of extrapection or introspection. Natural science researchers adopt a stance of extrapection, they are observers who draw their conclusions from the outside looking in. Human science researchers tend to rely more upon an introspective position, that is they seek to understand the meaning of phenomena in the client's lifeworld" (Becker, 1986).

Human science employs qualitative methodology, it is always based on some form of description. Experimentation and

phenomenology are therefore methods rooted in different theories.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The foundations of phenomenology are primarily philosophical. Phenomenology comes out of the idealistic tradition of philosophy. It is a science of consciousness. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) founded and developed phenomenology as an alternative to the natural scientific way of thinking and seeing. According to Husserl (1930), "phenomenology is a method which allows us to contact phenomena as we actually live them out and experience them."

In this respect, phenomenological methods underlie many existential philosophical enquiries. "Existential phenomenological psychology, has become that psychological discipline which seeks to explicate the essence, structure, or form of both human experience or human behavior as revealed through essentially descriptive techniques including disciplined reflection" (Valle &King, 1978, p. 7).

The central issue in existential phenomenology rests in the way that human beings are viewed. People are seen as having an indissoluble connection to the world. The person and the world are in a relationship of co-constitution. "Perhaps the most critical distinction between phenomenology and the natural science paradigm is phenomenology's assertion that we are of rather, than, in the world" (Valle & King, 1978, p. 11). This interdependence is based on a belief that people and the world are always in dialogue with each other-thus eliminating the subject object dualism known as the Cartesian split.

The other fundamental acknowledgement in phenomenology is that consciousness always has an object. Meaning that we are always conscious of something. Husserl reasoned that, "if consciousness is our primordial window on the world, then an understanding of human knowledge would be best based upon an understanding of human consciousness" (from Osborne, 1991, p. 4).

If as claimed by existential phenomenology, all knowledge is human knowledge and apprehended through our phenomenal experience, then the study of phenomenal experience is a good starting place for developing an understanding of what it is to be human (ontology). The focus of such an approach is the understanding of a person's experiences of their worlds and not the generation of explanatory laws (Giorgi, 1970).

AN OUTLINE OF THREE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHODS

There are potentially as many phenomenological methodologies as there are phenomenologists. That is to say, there is no one proper method. Each different phenomenological study requires a slightly different approach. The researcher needs to be flexible in his/her methods to allow data to emerge and to maintain its essential structure. Granit (1981) stated that guidelines for phenomenological methodologies have however been developed. Colaizzi (1978), Giorgi (1987), Wertz (1984), Aanastoos (1985), and Becker (1986) are among human science researchers who do concern themselves with developing methodological strategies in descriptive research. These strategies address considerations such as validity and reliability, without compromising the philosophical integrity of the basic tenets of phenomenology.

There are generally three major variations of the

phenomenological method: the individual, the reflective empirical, and the dialogal. In the individual phenomenological method, researchers use their own actual and imaginary experiences as well as those of others' written accounts to develop a thematic description of the phenomenon.

The empirical reflective and the dialogal methods are similar in several ways. Both types of study engage co-researchers, from whom descriptions are elicited. Both begin with an individual phenomenological report by the researcher, they contain a thematization of all the descriptive protocols, and they conclude with an extensive thematic description of the phenomenon. There are however, differences between the two methodologies. Typically, the empirical phenomenologist examines descriptions written by the co-researchers, and is solely responsible for thematic abstractions obtained from the data.

By contrast, the dialogal phenomenologist interviews the co-researchers orally, thematizes during the interview, as well as on his/her own and involves the co-researchers in that process (Granit, 1981).

Phenomenological methodologies therefore, range from fairly structured to relatively unstructured. The dialogal method places a heavier emphasis on the intersubjective nature of meaning and experience. In this type of research, the respondent is much more of a true co-researcher than in the other methods. Empirical reflective researchers attempt to prevent their own perspective from influencing the respondent by minimizing contact and not discussing their own points of view with the co-researchers. Though dialogal researchers may discuss their own ideas with the co-researchers, they adopt a careful attitude of respecting the integrity of the

response of the co-researcher as a fully representative example of his/her experience with the phenomenon. Empirical reflective and dialogal research are both empirical in that they are "based on the data of pretheoretical experience" (Wertz, 1985, p. 32). The aim of this research is to disclose meaning through reflection. It is not a matter of the researcher imposing meaning as Wertz (1985, p. 32) stated, "reflection is not speculation, but genuine finding, requiring the most rigorous grasp of the essence of the phenomenon. The researcher thereby grasps the whole of the phenomenon through the part expressed by the subject, making explicit the implicit root of the matter." For the purposes of this study the dialogal method will be employed. The reasons for this choice will be discussed.

EVALUATING THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

Phenomenology has been criticised for being introspective and too subjective, along with claims of not being a rigorous method. Wertz (1986) was of the belief that any consideration of reliability and validity in phenomenological research must begin by acknowledging that this type of research is based upon different metatheoretical assumptions to those used in natural science.

Natural scientific research is evaluated according to its validity, reliability and generalizability. Human science is based on a completely different scientific paradigm and so these evaluation criteria are not necessarily applicable to phenomenological research methods. Qualitative research by its very nature is difficult to replicate.

VALIDITY

In traditional natural scientific research, validity refers to

whether the measuring instrument actually measures the hypothesized variable. In phenomenological research, validity is concerned with the issue of researcher bias. The question is whether the researcher's description closely reflects the truth of the subjects' lived experience with the phenomenon. In order to determine whether a phenomenological research study is valid, "one must determine the precision of the measuring instrument, which in this case is the researcher " (Granit, 1985, p. 15).

In order to assess the validity of the phenomenological researcher's interpretations, there are four main methods. The first method is to suspend and bracket predispositions and biases in regards to the phenomenon under study. Also, by laying out his/her predispositions in relation to the phenomenon, the reader can then view the study with the researcher's perspective in mind.

Second, during collection and analysis of data, the researcher can regularly check interpretations with the co-researchers. This is to ensure that s/he is making accurate and true interpretations of the data, without imposing his/her biases. At this stage co-researchers can help clarify in order to get a faithful interpretation of the lived experience.

Thirdly, "the most crucial means of validating interpretations of phenomenological data is the juridical process of presenting coherent and convincing arguments" (Osborne, 1989, p. 19). Another check on the validity of the interpreted structure is if the experience described is shared by other people who did not participate in the study. The necessary and essential structures of the phenomenon which arise from the researcher's intuitive skills must be a faithful reflection of the phenomenon to which the data refer. The final test of validity is whether or not the co-researchers feel

that their experiences are reflected accurately in the final thematic descriptions.

RELIABILITY

In natural science research, if the controls are adequate, replication should yield the same results. In phenomenological research, if bias is minimized, then replication should yield similar, but not necessarily the identical results. In natural science, the researcher trades applicability to real life experience for control in the interests of generalizability and statistical confidence in his or her results. The phenomenological researcher trades such confidence for a comprehensive, contextual description of a human experience.

GENERALIZABILITY

Phenomenological results are not generalizable in the usual sense of the term, because this method does not involve random sampling or statistical analysis. The phenomenological method is a holistic approach to the study of human beings and aims at empathic generalizability, that is when our experiences resonate empathically with those of others. Therefore, if handled well, phenomenological results could be considered generalizable to the extent that they are shared by other people.

CHAPTER IV:
THE METHOD

RATIONALE

This chapter begins with a reasoned exposition into the appropriateness of the phenomenological method in answering my question. The object of enquiry will be the human being as s/he experiences him/herself in solitude in the wilderness. It is my aim, through adopting a phenomenological approach, to understand the inner perspective of the person in solitude, and to meaningfully reveal the nature of the experience with descriptive techniques. In deciding what method best addressed the question posed, I quickly came to realize that positivist approaches were unsuitable and would destroy the depth that first hand accounts of thoughts, feelings and perceptions could give me. By using numbers to represent the experience of wilderness solitude, I would be destroying the unique character of the data. By using quantitative approaches I would be representing in a very simplistic and superficial way, experiences that qualitative data, as well as my own experience of the phenomenon suggest are complex.

As researchers, we choose methods that best help us to explore our interests and answer our questions. Some questions are best addressed with quantitative methods. However, when exploring human experiences in everyday contexts, a qualitative methodology will grant a better understanding, by descriptively illustrating the underlying structures of a particular phenomenon. By using a qualitative method, the data can give voice to the complexity and power of the phenomenon under research.

The very nature of my question should, through unfolding the

qualitative and holistic nature of the solo experience, offer rich insights when explored through a phenomenological perspective.

Phenomenology is concerned with acquiring a deeper understanding of another's experience and "depends almost exclusively on the power of language for communication" (Giorgi, 1971, p. 100). The object of enquiry will be the human being as s/he experiences him/herself in solitude in the wilderness.

I feel that phenomenological research methods, whose aims are to enrich our understanding of the structures in experience by describing their parts and the relationship among them, will best serve the purposes of this research.

Phenomenology is a descriptive methodology, I therefore, do not seek to give explanations as to why solitude is experienced as it is. I seek only to see clearly and articulate faithfully the experience of being in solitude in the wilderness. Wittgenstein (1963) was aware that the profound difficulty inherent in such a task is that there is no complete correspondence between language and experience According to Van Manen (1984a),

> phenomenological research aims to establish a renewed contact with original experience. True thinking on a lived experience is a thoughtful reflective grasping of what it is that renders this or that particular experience its special significance. Phenomenological research is the study of lived experience, it is the study of the lifeworld - the world as we immediately experience it rather than as we conceptualize, categorize and theorize about it. Phenomenology aims to come to a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our experiences. Phenomenological research is a search

for the fullness of living (p. 37).

Through this research I am not setting out to prove anything. In fact, it is unlikely that anything definitive will arise from such a study rather, I am trying to grasp the essence of a human experience. My method will demonstrate the dialogal relationship of a person in nature with self. Phenomenological research on a particular phenomenon is never complete, it is always in a process. Different researchers will see different perspectives and uncover different angles depending on the position that they view the phenomenon from. "This is the existential meaning of the phenomenological thesis, that research can never exhaust the investigated phenomenon, that research can never be complete" (Colaizzi, 1973, p.70). There is therefore, great value in different researchers examining the same phenomenon or even replicating studies, as this helps us to come to a multi-perspectival understanding of the phenomenon under study.

> The perceived phenomenon is analaogous to a mineral crystal which appears to have many different sizes and shapes depending on the intensity, angle and colour or the light which strikes its surfaces. Only after seeing these different reflections and varied appearances on repeated occasions does the constant, unchanging crystalline structure become known to us (Valle & King, 1978, p. 15).

THE CO-RESEARCHERS

The methodology I have chosen utilizes the technique of acquiring descriptions. Also, by virtue of my question, my task is one of articulation of the phenomenon. To do this will necessitate the help of co-researchers, who, will from their own experiences of

solo, provide written and oral descriptions. According to Van Manen (1984a, p. 55), "the point of phenomenological research is to borrow other peoples experiences and their reflections in order to be better able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience in the context of the whole experience."

In phenomenological research, the term co-researcher is preferred to the term 'subject'. Co-researcher is more appropriate as it helps to emphasize the co-operative nature of the research. The criteria for the selection of co-researchers is an important concern in phenomenological research. The principle criteria for choosing co-researchers will be that they are able to provide a full description of their lived experience of wilderness solitude. I was looking for co-researchers who were able to communicate from a level of awareness that enabled them to identify and describe various experiences of behaviour, perceptions, thoughts, insights and feelings whilst on solo.

> The purpose of phenomenological research is to increase the understanding of a functioning experiential concept, not to generalize statistical findings to a specific population. Thus participants are chosen who are able to provide rich descriptions of their experiences of the concept and who are willing to engage in their own imaginative development of events and variations (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 19).

The number of co-researchers is varies. Between one and ten are recommended for phenomenological investigations. Generally, as many co-researchers are needed as it takes to adequately illuminate the phenomenon.

Two males and two females expressed an interest in being co-researchers: two were graduates of the University of Alberta. (one male aged twenty-two from Physical Education; one female aged twenty-nine from Education.) the third, a forty year old male air traffic controller, and the fourth, a twenty one year old female who was unemployed at the time. Only two of the co-researchers were known to me before the project. The other two had heard about the research through friends and contacted me, expressing an interest to be involved. These people do not constitute a statistical sample, but an interesting collection of people that allows us insight into a human experience.

Biographical details and circumstances of meeting each of the co-researchers can be seen at the introduction to each individual's protocol. The small sample size does not pose methodological problems as the goal of the study is not generalization, but a description of the essential themes of wilderness solitude. Sheer numbers are not as important as getting an illustrative example of the phenomenon. This contrasts with the natural scientific paradigm where such a narrow sample would lead to difficulties in generalizability of the research findings.

PROCEDURE: THE DIALOGAL METHOD

As stated earlier, there is no such thing as 'the' phenomenological method. The particular procedure that any researcher adopts depends upon their question and how to best answer that particular question. "Phenomenological research has been carried out with great methodological variation while remaining within the spirit of the general definition" (Polkinghorne, 1981,p. 12).

Initial reading, reflection and discussion suggested that the dialogal method described by Giorgi (1975) and Wertz (1986), would possibly be the most effective and appropriate method to research the phenomenon of wilderness solitude. The empirical reflective and the interview methods were not chosen, due to the broader range of data collection that the dialogal method allowed me. The dialogal method allowed me to gather data both in the form of journals (written) and through interviews (oral). The combination of both written and oral data gave me a rich insight and a large base of information.

The written accounts were very thoughtful and contained many insightful reflections of the solo experience. The interviews however, were more evocative of lived experience. During the interviews participants were invited to talk at length about their experiences. This outpouring of words offered me a window to their consciousness. Through these conversations the topic seemed to come alive. Through words often ambiguities, confusion, joy and a whole complexity of thoughts, feelings and perceptions surfaced that the journals did not capture.

DIALOGAL INTERVIEWS

The dialogal method relies heavily on the use of interviews for data collection and clarification. Not only this, but dialogical interviews also allowed me to check the accuracy of thematizations and interpretations of the written data. Also, during this process, one is able to clarify and gather more data.

Open ended, minimally structured interviews were used. This flexible, approach allowed the phenomenon to be explored in as much depth as possible. Becker (1986, p.102) noted that,

"researchers use interviewing because the phenomenon they wish to articulate is deeply embedded in the relational and dynamic human world".

Each interview was very unique and became a creative sharing of experiences and reflections between myself and the co-researchers. It therefore, became a questioning together to arrive at a deeper shared understanding of wilderness solitude. Strausser (1969) advocated a dialogic phenomenology which would search for what we experience rather than what I experience.

The interviews were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. When this climate was established, co-researchers were comfortable in describing personal details and experiences of the phenomenon. "The interview experience holds a potential for the development of trust and commitment, and for the growth of a new human relationship, and of new or deepened understanding" (Weber, 1986, p. 66). The setting for each interview was always a mutually chosen place, comfortable and free from disturbances. Weber (1986) commented

> through dialogue, the interview becomes a joint reflection on a phenomenon, a deepening of experience for both interviewer and participant. It becomes a conversational relation between two people, one in which they come to learn as much about each other as they learn about whatever is the topic of conversation (p. 65).

INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

Each of the co-researchers was interviewed three times individually. This was followed by a final interview involving all of

the co-researchers. The initial pre-solo interview was to discuss hopes, fears, anxieties, expectations and perceptions of the solo. During this time, information was given regarding the conditions of the solo. The instructions were as follows:

Go to a wilderness place of your choice for three days and three nights. The place should be one where you will be undisturbed, equally the place should be undisturbed by your presence. Leave your watch behind, attune yourself to natural rhythms. Take only a journal and a pen, no books as these will distract you away from yourself. Record your thoughts, feelings, emotions and perceptions during the solo as faithfully and honestly as possible.

The second interview followed shortly after the solo experience of each participant. This was an opportunity for me to gather verbal data while the experience was still fresh and alive in the mind of the soloist. At this stage I had not read the written journal.

The third interview was after I had read and thematized the journal. This meeting allowed me to check the accuracy of my interpretations, as well as gather additional data. The successive data gathering interviews allowed me to focus on the emerging themes and to get a more complete illumination of the phenomenon, as well as to produce a clarifying description of the essential elements. As the interviews progressed interpretation became part of the interview dialogue. Each interview concluded with me giving a summary of verbal data collected. At this point, the co-researcher was able to confirm, elaborate and correct my interpretive portrayal of the data.The final group interview was a productive supplement to the individual interviews. It also allowed co-researchers to meet one another and share their experiences.

BRACKETING

"For human science researchers bracketing enhances the validity or the research method because it demands an awareness of how one becomes involved, a self-consciousness about the particular cultural context of the research, and an on-going awareness of preconceptions" (Becker, 1986; Salner, 1986).

Before proceeding, it is necessary for me to comment on my own perspective regarding this project and to deal with the issue of bracketing. In choosing a subject to research I am immediately connecting myself to it in some way. I cannot pretend, or claim as a researcher, to be separate from my study. The idea that researchers can be unbias is unrealistic, as our questions come from our experiences. It is likely that due to the nature of my study and my previous experiences that I will become bound with my research. As the phenomenon is one which I have a lived understanding, I am, in this respect, also a subject in my own study. My past experiences and foreunderstandings will undoubtedly colour how I see the experience of others. Following a rigorous process of self reflection, I intend to articulate my predispositions and biases so that the reader is able to take my perspective into account when reading interpretations of the data.

My first wilderness solo experience took place just below the summit of the highest mountain in Australia. This was a Vision Quest. I had been guided to this experience by a Cheyenne/Crow Medicine Woman. The Quest was a three day and three night period of fasting and being solitary in the wilderness. It was both an intensely satisfying and intensely frightening experience. This looking inward, during a period of solo and fast, answered my deepest spiritual questions and directed my life. It was the ultimate

in self denial requiring me to fast from all things familiar. My experience of solo allowed me to have a vivid connection to things beyond the senses, beyond the material and beyond the often superficial nature of life. The solo did what could not be done with asceticism alone. Since the Vision Quest, there have been other solos for the same duration. One last winter when there was nothing more important to me than to take time away from university life, clock, schedule and deadline to slow down, go off by myself and simply be.

As a result of the solo experience, I feel inwardly renewed. Solitude offers many things to me. As well as being a powerful tool for self discovery and catharsis, it is a going within in order to give without. "Intimacy with nature allows one to turn inward, in order that there may be a sharing outward" (Morrison, 1987, p. 97).

It is my belief that wilderness solitude is a therapeutic experience, during which there is a large potential for growth and self discovery. I also believe that this reliance upon our own resources helps one not only get in touch with self but, also enhances the undeniable connection that we have with the earth and all other living things. For some, solo may be a coming to terms with one's ultimate aloneness.

These are several preconceptions that I must first bring into my own awareness, and then make every effort to suspend, or bracket them. My own personal experiences of the phenomenon compose the lens through which I see the phenomenon. "Once aware of these pre-understandings, I am more able to set them aside and am less likely to impose them upon the research participants" (Becker, 1986,p.114). Similarly, if my pre-understandings are suspended I can then attempt to look at the data through a clear lens.

Following my own experiences of being solitary in the

wilderness, I had a certain sort of fascination about solitude and the feelings of others in this situation. Jourard (1968, p. 116) in Disclosing Man to Himself developed a hypothesis about fascination, which mirrors the process that one goes through when doing human science research.

> I believe that independent learning, the embodiment of the state of being fascinated, involves six stages. The first is the experience of the impasse. The next stage we will provisionally call the stage of detachment, a kind of dying. The third is immersion in oneself - an entry into one's centre, one's own source of experiencing. Next is an emergence, or rebirth. Fifth is the experience of new possibilities. Sixth is the selection and pursuit of one of these.

DATA ANALYSIS

As with the phenomenological method, there is no one method for analysing phenomenological data. Personal journals and interviews formed the data sources for my study. The journal is in effect a self report. This experiential protocol was a first hand account of an individual's experience of wilderness solitude. The data are descriptions of lived experience and personal encounters with the phenomenon.

The procedures which I employed are those which are relatively common and have been discussed in literature (Alpack, 1986; Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975). This method of data analysis is a hierarchical system of thematic analysis. It was a reflective process of systematic interpretation, paraphrasing and thematization of each individual's protocol. The procedural steps in the data analysis were

as follows : (1) initial reading, (2) thematic analysis, (3) first order clustering of themes, (4) second order clustering of themes, (5) constructing a written integrative synthesis of the experience of wilderness solitude. These steps are explained in greater detail.

INITIAL READING

Each journal was read several times before any analysis was initiated. This allowed me to get a 'feel' for how each co-researcher experienced the solo. The original protocols are not replicated here. There are however, co-researchers' descriptions included under the theme headings to exemplify a particular theme.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis is done by a sentence by sentence approach. Each sentence was examined to see what it revealed about the experience of wilderness solitude. I looked at what the co-researcher was saying and then extracted the underlying meaning using a thematic word or phrase. At times a paraphrase was sufficient to capture the theme. My primary concern at this stage was that I had interpreted the themes accurately. Potentially at the stage there could be a danger of mis-interpretation, as this was my interpretation of their experience. In order to reduce the possibility of mis-interpretation, each co-researcher was given a copy of their protocol and asked to check the validity and accuracy of the theme. I invited the co-researchers to relabel or clarify themes that were inaccurate. This collaborating interview, following the thematization of journal entries prevented me from imposing my own meaning. Together, we arrived at a truthful and accurate thematic analysis.

FIRST ORDER CLUSTERING OF THEMES

All the sentences echoing similar themes were grouped under one encapsulating thematic cluster heading. These are presented in Table 1. Each thematic heading is exemplified by theme statements from the original protocols.

SECOND ORDER CLUSTERING OF THEMES

At this stage, I attempted to reduce the first order clusters further by finding commonalities amongst certain themes. I then categorized common themes under a more 'all encompassing' heading. For example, in Nicole's protocol references to sights, sounds, smells, physical feelings, were all put under a theme heading 'perceptual shift'.

WRITTEN SYNTHESIS

The within person data analysis was completed with a written synthesis of the main themes from the protocol. The main themes captured the essence of the experience. A final validating step was to ask each co-researcher whether the written synthesis was an accurate description of the main elements of their experience. Relevant data that emerged from the validating interviews was incorporated into the final written synthesis.

This procedure was followed for each participant and formed the within person analysis. The next step was to do an across person analysis. This consisted of drawing together the themes that ran as common threads throughout each of the co-researchers' protocols. The final shared structure was common to all of the participants. This section was completed with a written synthesis of shared or common themes that form the essence of wilderness solitude.

CHAPTER V:
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents each co-researcher's protocol, as analyzed according to the method described in chapter IV. The thematic analysis from the original protocols can be seen in Appendices I-V. A short biography of the co-researcher is followed by a table illustrating the first order clustering of themes. On the left hand side is the thematic cluster heading that helped to reveal the structure of the phenomenon of wilderness solitude. Opposite to this, on the right, are theme statements from the original protocol that exemplify the cluster heading. They are labelled by the day and the sentence number from the original journal. In this way, the sentence can be read in the context of the whole experience.

The second table in each protocol illustrates the second order clustering of themes. On the left is a more encompassing cluster heading and on the right are the first order themes that fall under the auspices of this second order heading. An interpretive synthesis of each of the protocols, derived from the tables is then presented. This is supported by relevant data and excerpts from the original descriptions where appropriate. This section forms the within person analysis.

Following the presentation of the four co-researchers' protocols, an integrative reflective analysis is presented. This forms the across person analysis. Here the common recurrent themes that have emerged in each of the protocols are expanded upon and discussed. This results in a generalized description of the essential themes regarding the phenomenon as a whole.

INITIAL MEETING WITH SKY

I first met Sky at the university, she was in a class of mine. Sky sparkled with life and her energy seemed to radiate from every cell. Her interest and enthusiasm in outdoor activities was what initially drew us together. We had struck a common note. She had a genuine interest in the area of wilderness solitude, even though she had never actually done a solo herself. As I explained my research to her, I looked across the table at two bright shiny eyes that were saying, yes this is what I want to do. Listening to Sky talk about solitude and her need to go off quietly for three days and three nights, gave me a sense of how profound and important an experience this could potentially be for any given individual. Talking with Sky that night about solitude and about my project was a wonderful experience of sharing ideas, insights and fears associated with the solo experience. The pleasant thing about our meetings was that they flowed so beautifully, there was no script or rehearsed set of questions. Also, there was no restriction on the time that we had, many discussions going into the darker hours.

There is a certain sense of excitement in discovering something new. During these initial meetings with each of the co-researchers, I had a real feeling of this sense becomming part of my being. There was discovery, not only of an area that interested me deeply, but also discovery of new people. Sky was sharply conscious that the time was right for her to do a solo. She felt that this opportunity to do a solo was one of the most exciting things that had happened to her for a long time. She felt that it would create an opportunity to get closer to herself, to the core of her being and the essence of who she really was. Sky also saw the solo as an opportunity to become more attuned with her physical self.

Women's bodies flow with the rhythms of the moon and the tides but so often we are out of touch with our bodies. Our metabolism and our biological clock seem to be governed by external influences when all we need to do is listen to our bodies in silence to know what is best. In addition to this attunement,Sky expressed the desire to become attuned to her senses and to really experience the solo through these faculties, as in day to day life they appear to be numb.

Solitude offered Sky an opportunity to face things that she felt she had not dealt with adequately. With the multilayered relationships that we have with others and ourselves, it seems easy to push things aside, to repress them in the hope that they go away. If I am deafening myself to parts of myself then I am defended. I am no longer open and receptive to the world. Sky's hope was that in solitude she would unfold to herself and the world by recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses. The solo was also seen as an ideal time to let suppressed material rise and deal with it in an environment that offered peace and no judgement.

Sky talked a bit about her fears. Together we explored this area and she came to realize that her fear was of nothing external. In part, she described her feeling as "a fear of fear", I believe I understood what she was trying to convey. In addition to this primordial fear was a fear of areas within herself that were unfamiliar or that had been repressed, as they were too painful or anxiety producing to have in her conscious mind. This material, she felt sure would surface during her time alone.

Together, we found a site that would be an appropriate place for Sky to do her solo. The night before she was due to leave on her solo the temperatures dropped to -33 degrees centigrade. The next

day there was an unexpected snow storm and the temperature continued to be low. I talked to Sky on the phone suggesting that she could postpone her solo until the weather cleared up, as going out under these conditions alone could be a real survival experience.

There was no question that she would back out at this stage, bad conditions or not, her mind had been made up. Psychologically she was ready to go although, the night before there had been some anxiety about the whole thing. There is a stage, she explained, when it is no longer possible to turn back. That morning, even with the atrociously cold December weather, she decided to set out on her own for three days and three nights in quest of furthering understandings of self, and re-connecting with nature. Today, I was reminded strongly of a passage Kohak wrote about the cold and the outdoors. "Is avoiding the discomfort of the cold worth the price of giving up the sight of the January full moon rising behind the bare darkened trees?" (1984, p. 43).

TABLE 1 - FIRST ORDER CLUSTERS OF THEMES

THEMATIC CLUSTER HEADING	THEME STATEMENTS
1. Self nurturance and growth through time with self.	Day two 23. I have grown in this time alone. 24. It has reminded me of what little it takes to be happy. 25. Warm is good. 26. Having a stove work to cook food is better. 27. Herb tea and a great view of my woods to look at while I have tea is great. 28. To conquer your fears you must first realize what they are.
2. Recognition of need for solitude.	Day two 10. The end is coming too soon. 11. I'm just starting to relax and feel at one with myself. 12. I have to do this again very soon. Other statements: 18.
3. Time.	Day two 10. I have absolutely no idea what time it is that seems so odd. 15. Too much time spent making fires. 30. I'm not finding attunement with my biological clock. 31. I eat when I am hungry but stay in bed when it's warm, when I really want to be getting up.
4. Enjoyment of solitude.	Eve one 1. The anxiety has passed and its time to be alone. 2. Alone but not lonely. 5. Peacefulness... Day three 5. It has occurred to me these past three days that I have not been lonely,

alone yes, but I've neither needed nor wanted anyone to disrupt my solitude.
9. When I look out the windows in the early hours of the dawn I am at peace.

5. Reference to quietness/ attunement to sounds.

Eve one
3. No sound but the crackling of the fire and the hum of the lantern.

Day one
1. In the grey of the early morning it is quiet.
2. Very quiet as if the world has gone to sleep and I am the only one awake.

Day two
9. I don't hear any birds.
29. Took a walk in the woods tonight, thought I heard an owl.

6. Darkness and light.

Eve one
6. No immediate threat it is dark.

Day one
17. The light is soothing to the soul.
18. It is dark now.
19. I lit the lantern so that I could see , but now I can't see outside so I'm turning it out.
20. The woods that bid me come explore this morning are not so familiar now, they seem foreboding as if inhabited by different creatures.
21. The snow laden branches of the giant spruce make eerie shapes outside the window and all is deathly quiet.
28. I don't remember the last time I saw so many stars, I'm not afraid out here now it reminds me of home.

7. Difficulty escaping human constructs.	Day one 5. A day of unwinding. 6. It is difficult to do as I please it seems that I should be responsible for something or that I need to be somewhere at a specific time.
8. References to animals.	Day one 11. Followed some moose tracks. 13. No animals but lots of signs, just the occasional chattering of a chickadee. Day three 4. It was very cold this morning but a chickadee was my first visitor and that makes me feel all soft and cuddly inside, (chickadees are my favourite birds).
9. Satisfaction of basic needs.	Eve one 8. Inside it is warm near the fire, and safe from the unknown, hiding from something perhaps. Day one 9. The hierarchy of basic needs is a recurring theme, simple, warmth, food water. 16. It's great in the room at the top with the little heater.
10. Elements.	Day one 12. My eye lashes are frozen together but the sun is out and the sky is blue. Day two 8. It's colder than yesterday. 14. The sun is going down, there is a great view from the room at the top. Day three

1. What a beautiful sunrise this morning,all blues and pink.
2. It's such a pleasure to open your eyes and see the woods and the sky.
3. It's very cold this morning.

11. Primordial fear.

Day one

16. I am very visual, I think as long as can see I am not afraid.
23. My mind races out as if being chased, I fight sleep madly should the night consume me.

12. Closeness to place.

Day one

14. I feel very good very comfortable in my woods.

Day two

16. I feel so good here. How you feel about where you are is very important

13. Unfolding with nature.

Day two

1. I found it. High above the river nestled in the trees, my spot.
2. And there it is, creativity is affected by darkness nor light but by the absence and presence of water. I feel
inner peace by the water.
3. My soul dances upon the water and plays beneath the waves.

14. Opening up from within.

Day one

25. The night feels like it could go on forever, my mind wanders to issues I've previously successfully repressed.
26. I feel like I am being drawn into dealing with things that I would rather not.

Day two

4. I've thought a lot on life, specifically on the direction mine is going, and

although I know I am following the right road, I feel I am taking too many detours off the main path.

6. Maybe it's just taking too long for me to find my little house on the water.
7. That was a great ski, there is something about gliding on the top of the snow that makes you feel free from constraints.

15. Humanan v's Nature thoughts.Day one

27. Man has removed himself so far from nature that instead of feeling part of it, we feel like an intrusion upon it.

Day two

21. Man versus nature as opposed to man as part of nature versus himself.

Day three

8. Love, understanding and appreciation of the natural environment enhances man's love, understanding and appreciation of himself.

A further reduction of the first order themes from Sky's protocol led to two dominant and re-occuring themes. These I have called Communion with nature and Unfolding from within. The first order thematic clusters that fall into each of these larger, more embracing themes, are listed here.

TABLE 2 - SECOND ORDER CLUSTERS OF THEMES

THEMATIC CLUSTER HEADING	THEME STATEMENTS
1. Communion with nature.	1. Changing moods of darkness and light. 2. References to animals. 3. The elements. 4. Closeness to place. 5. Unfolding with nature. 6.Ideas of man's relationship to nature. 7. Escaping human constructs.
2. Unfolding from within.	1. Self nurturance and growth through time with self. 2. Recognition of need for solitude. 3. Enjoyment of solitude. 4. Adjusting to pace and the new meaning of time. 5. Satisfaction of basic needs. 6. Primordial fear. 7. Opening up from within.

These two second order themes encapsulate the essence of Sky's solo experience. It is a discussion of this that follows.

INTERPRETIVE SYNTHESIS OF SKY'S SOLO EXPERIENCE

COMMUNION WITH NATURE

This theme is characterized by feeling a certain bond with everything around. Feeling comfortable and an equal part of one's surroundings. Nature becomes a temple where one can learn about self and therefore, becomes a medium for understanding. For many, nature presents itself as a harsh and threatening environment to be conquered. For Sky, nature posed no such threat. In this environment, she felt part of all that surrounded her, she was much more open and receptive to whatever was to emerge from the silence.

Through experiencing and witnessing the different moods of the woods and nature at different times of the day and night, Sky was filled with a certain sense of peacefulness. Her moods, also influenced by these external changes, drifted and changed throughout the day and into the darkness.

As evening draws in, and darkness cradles the day, bringing with it a different mood and changing the tone of the landscape, familiar objects are enveloped in a different light, casting sometimes unfamiliar shadows across the land.

The snow ladened branches of the giant spruce make eerie shapes outside the window and all is deathly quiet. The woods that bid me come explore this morning are not so familiar now, they seem foreboding as if inhabited by different creatures.

The same darkness that brings unfamiliar night shadows also brings a sky full of stars, there is much comfort in this. "I don't remember the last time I saw so many stars, I'm not afraid out here now, it reminds me of home."

Sunrise and sunset seem to be powerful times for the soloist. These symbolize the arrival of lightness or darkness and all the moods, feelings and, textures associated with each part of the day. Sunshine, the polar opposite of darkness, to Sky meant light and warmth, also it symbolized new beginnings and a new chance. "What a beautiful sunrise this morning all blues and pinks. It's such a pleasure to open your eyes and see the woods and the sky."

Early morning seems to have a quality of peace about it, it comes shrouded in more silence than at other times of the day. In the quietness of the early morning, Sky feels like the only person on earth and her solitude is felt more intensely at this time.

"When I look out the windows in the early hours of dawn I am at peace. In the grey of the early morning it is quiet. Very quiet as if the world has gone to sleep and I am the only one awake. I don't even hear any birds."

For Sky there is a great pleasure in living closely with nature and the elements. This brings such a variety of perceptual experiences. Even when the conditions appear unfavourable and the freezing temperatures present some discomfort, there is still a gratitude and strength drawn from being outside. It is as if nothing could interrupt or disturb the flow she felt with nature. "My eye lashes are frozen together, but the sun is out and the sky is blue." It seems that the presence of the sky and the sunshine is enough.

As day once again recedes into the approaching darkness, Sky lights a lantern, the light she says is, "soothing to the soul." Quickly she realizes that the light paradoxically obscures her vision of the dark. "I lit the lantern so I could see, but now I can't see outside so I'm turning it out."

Kohak (1987) talks of humans using lights to expel the

darkness from their lives, in his words there are implications that in doing so we rob ourselves of the gifts of darkness.

> We do not use our lights specifically to illuminate a nighttime task, we use them generically to banish the night. We flood our rooms with it, even the unoccupied ones, and surround our dwellings with floodlights, creating the illusion of a perpetual day. Yet we are not only creatures of the light. We are creatures of the rhythm of the day and night, and the night, too, is our dwelling place (p. 34).

In Sky's journal many references are made to the animals. She realized that she was not totally alone. Although she was without human company, there was a whole community of animals and birds living in the area that she had gone to. During the daytime, she followed animal tracks a great deal, by the tracks left in the snow it was easy for her to see that animals had come close to her dwelling and then left silently again. The birds seem to be perpetual visitors dropping by at all times of the day. "It was very cold this morning but a chickadee was my first visitor and that makes me feel all soft and cuddly inside, chickadees are my favourite birds." Sky seemed to sense a kinship with the animals whose homes were all around her.

The woods where Sky spent her solo very quickly became home and a comfortable place to be. She recognized that feeling good about the place one chooses to be is very important. "I feel very good and very comfortable in my woods. I feel so good here. How you feel about where you are is very important." This echoes similar experiences of the other soloists who quickly formed attachments to their solo site, often having very protective feelings about the area and regarding it as their own. The woods offered a

place where Sky could, through silence and peace start on a journey that has no real beginning and no real end; this being the journey into the self.

Sky found herself slowly starting to unfold with nature. While out walking one day she finds a spot that, in its beauty, sends her soaring. Through discovering this place she comes to a realization about her creativity

> I found it. High above the river nestled in the trees, my spot....my creativity is affected by the absence or the presence of water. My soul dances upon the water and plays beneath the waves.

Sky is acutely aware of the difficulty that she had initially escaping feelings that she had brought with her. Feelings of "ought" and adjusting to the pace of the woods of not having to rush somewhere by a certain time.

"It is difficult to do as I please, it seems that I should be responsible for something or that I need to be somewhere at a specific time." It is apparent that we are all too often in a headless rush to nowhere, leaving ourselves by the wayside.

Initially, it seemed very strange to her that she should become so out of touch with clock time. "I have absolutely no idea what time it is, that seems so odd." There was some frustration as she felt out of tune with her body, reflected in her words, "I'm not finding attunement with my biological clock." Although Sky could not find attunement with her internal clock, gradually throughout, the solo attunement came and there was no longer a battle; nature gently led her by the hand and her internal clock slipped back into its natural pace.

Darkness once again contours the day and Sky made a

permeatingly important discovery about her primitive need to be outside. There was a gentleness in her discovery. Almost like an apology for the way nature has suffered at the hand of an uncaring human. She did not intend to intrude upon nature during these three days and nights, there was forgiveness in her coming. "Man has removed himself so far from nature that instead of feeling part of it, we feel like an intrusion upon it." Sky felt that our lives seem to be dominated by the acquisition of material things and this needs to be counterbalanced by a return to the gifts of nature and the simplicity found there. She did not want to be part of the uncaring human removed from nature but rather wanted to be part of it, as it had so undeniably become an important part of her. "Love, understanding and appreciation of the natural environment enhances man's love, understanding and appreciation of himself."

UNFOLDING FROM WITHIN

This is the second major theme that characterized Sky's solo experience. For Sky, solitude was a conscious and willing choice to allow her longing for quiet, its rightful and needed place in her life. Part of this willingness to accept solitude entails allowing the everyday routines and expectations to recede and to allow the silence to embrace her fully. The chattering of her mind inside was contrasted by the awesome silence that surrounded her.

The period of solitude left Sky with a feeling of having nurtured herself and grown through the time alone. This is echoed in her words. "I have grown in this time alone. It reminded me of what little it takes to be happy."

Sky had a strong recognition of her need for solitude, it seemed that her time alone passed almost too quickly. "The end is

coming too soon. I'm just starting to relax and feel at one with myself. I have to do this again very soon."

Sky was very comfortable in solitude and discovered a fundamental difference between alone and lonely. "It has occurred to me these past three days that I have not been lonely, alone yes, but I've neither needed or wanted anyone to disrupt my solitude....alone but not lonely." This state of being totally immersed in her solitude and her own being she described in part as "peacefulness."

In order for Sky to be able to become fully immersed in her self and her being, she realized that some basic needs had to be meet. If she was preoccupied with feelings of hunger or was feeling cold, it was very difficult to focus on herself. "The hierarchy of needs is a recurring theme, simply, warmth, food and water." In temperatures of -30C warmth was the most dominant need.

In addition to meeting the basic needs, Sky was acutely aware of the importance of being in an environment that is non threatening and where one is without fear. It does not appear to be the daytime that is fearful, but the night time when her mind starts to play tricks with the darkness. "My mind races out as if being chased, I fight sleep madly should the night consume me." She attributed her fear in part to the lack of vision that the darkness afforded her. "I'm very visual, I think as long as I can see I'm not afraid." Sky later commented that she relies on her visual senses too much. During her period of solitude there was a conscious effort to allow other senses to open fully and to not be too reliant upon the visual messages alone. She commented that darkness can be frightening for visual creatures.The night was a powerful time for Sky, a time where she was very much absorbed in herself, at times more than she wanted to be and it felt like she was almost being dragged to face

issues that daily had been easy to avoid.

> The night feels like it could go on forever, my mind wanders to issues I've previously successfully repressed. I feel like I am being drawn into dealing with things that I would rather not.

Darkness for Sky almost personifies the solitude of the wilderness in the sense that she is in a situation, inescapably face to face with self. Morgan (1986) asked in this situation, "do you want to be yourself or don't you?" (p. 29). In the darkness, she starts to critically reflect upon her life and its direction. "I've thought a lot on life, specifically on the direction mine is going, and although I know I am following the right road....maybe it's just taking me too long to find my little house on the water."

Through her experience of solitude, Sky was conscious of how our once simple lives, had become so complex. She commented that "we appear to have come far but really how far is it?". Her experience of going outdoors in solitude was a return to simplicity, a casting of complexities in order to fully grasp the essence of self that lay waiting to be discovered. Sky's return from the wilderness was a willing one. Having for the first time experienced the solitude of the woods and its therapeutic value, she knew that it would not be long before she would once again go back and listen to the silence. Upon her return, we met and I asked her a question about sunlight being soothing to the soul, she wrote me a poem.

> You are indeed rich
> who rise to greet the sun
> And having basked in its warmth in sleep
> With the splendour of its setting
> etched clearly in your mind.

INITIAL MEETING WITH TIM

I had never met Tim before our first meeting, we had only talked on the telephone. We arranged to meet in a small restaurant that was quiet and which, would allow us to talk without distraction. Tim's nature was such that I immediately felt very comfortable with him. I could not help noticing how he smiled at everyone he came into contact with. I found him to be a very genuine and warm human being.

Conversation flowed easily as we quickly identified that we both enjoy travelling. With that in common, our conversation was endless with stories of far off places and interesting cultures. Tim talked of his travels in Africa, India, Nepal and Tibet. Intrigued by the mystery of these places, I asked no end of exhaustive questions to which he spoke eloquently. I got a real sense for Tim as a person with similar outlooks, beliefs and views about life as myself. In Tim, I saw a kindred spirit.

We moved quickly onto a deeper level of conversation, where there was a more intimate sharing of self and past. Conversation moved into the solo, this was not a forced change in direction, but it flowed naturally from what had gone before.

Tim expressed initial anxiety about doing a solo. His anxiety, he said, arose from a fear of the unknown. Simultaneously, from deeper within, he felt a real need to do a solo. He was searching for the courage to step over the edge and meet the experience with an open mind. Tim talked about how his life was in transition. He was, therefore, seeking solitude to clarify, understand and to ask questions to which he had the answers, but needed the time and space of solitude to allow them to surface from within. When Tim said this it reminded me strongly of a passage from Khalil Gibran's book, The

Prophet.

After the initial plunge, Tim anticipated that the experience would be a very positive step towards further understanding of self and an opportunity for personal growth. Tim recognized awareness as a key to many doors; through solo, he felt his self awareness would be increased.

We discussed choice of place for the solo. I expressed that the place chosen should be one where you feel very comfortable and can be at peace, free from disturbances.

The issue of whether to travel or not during solo arose. I pointed out that if one is travelling and in a different place each evening then much is lost since one can learn a lot from one place. In one location, you can learn much about how its moods change with time, lightness and darkness, and weather patterns. It is possible to become familiar with the other life in the area. One place can become a friend, and comfort can be found.

Towards the end of our first meeting Tim expressed a belief that nothing comes without giving. He said that he was, "prepared to go the distance," in order to reap the benefits that he perceived lay ahead. Our first meeting was a very positive and interesting one. Tim had described his pre-solo thoughts and feelings very well so I had a really clear idea of how he felt when he took the first steps into solitude.

During this initial meeting with Tim, I started to realize that not only am I to become intimately bound with my research, but also, I am going to become intimately bound with the people that are helping me with my research. We share so much in common. It is a questing together for truth. And as we enter this unknown world together, sometimes tentatively, sometimes holding hands, it makes

stepping over the edge, entering an unfamiliar place and asking about the unknown a lot easier. It is inevitable that trust and bond develops through sharing on a deeper level.

TABLE 3 - FIRST ORDER CLUSTERS OF THEMES

THEMATIC CLUSTER HEADING	THEME STATEMENTS
1. Solo as a process to get in touch with self.	Day one 14. Maybe this solo will answer further this issue. 17. I would have to do the solo or I wouldn't be at peace with myself until I did. 31. I want my positive happy attitude back. 41. Dinner cooks on the airtight and I really feel at peace, a little sad but so much better than I've felt lately. Other statements: 18. Day two 29. Feeling good and much more positive about life in general, this time almost feels like a cleansing for me. 30. Feel much more in control of my emotional and mental health. Other statements: 37. Day three 9. I find writing a nice pastime almost as if I have someone to talk to when I'm putting my feelings on paper. 20. Sat by the fire until only embers then into the tent for a short scrawl on the pages. 26. I left an agitated person and am returning a peaceful and serene one. 28. I've always had a carefree positive

attitude on life.
Other statements: 16, 27 and 29.

2. Return to simplicity.

Day one
1. Rather a hectic time to pack, plan and eventually arrive at Bear lake near Edson.
20. Time until dark was spent choppig and cutting wood, cooking lunch and preparing the camp.
37. Had to go out and cut some more wood my little stove seems to devour the stuff.
Other statements: 19.

Day two
3. Breakfast and boil some water for drinking.
20. Guess I'd better go and work out some wood for this evening.
24. Lit the stove and lantern and I'm settling in for the evening.
33. Just playing away on the guitar, feeling tired and content.
40. Cooked dinner then played more guitar.
41. Stoked the stove with wet wood so it would burn longer then off to bed.
Other statements: 23.

Day three
3. Time to get up eat and get on with the day.
4. After breakfast begin cleaning up camp and ferrying things over to the new campsite.
12. Took a lot more work to set up than I thought to set up new camp.
18. Made dinner of stew and built a fire right outside the tent door.

3. Thoughts and feelings about solitude.

Day one
5. Last night however things being quiet

at work I discussed this solo with my co-workers.
6. The realization of how long the nights would be began to sink in and I looked forward to beginning this adventure and seeing how I would fare.
26. With the world on the brink of war this seems almost an escape for me.
Other statements: 7, 9, 10 and 16.

Day two
5. I know this is a break and that makes it easier to enjoy, I don't think it would be necessarily the same if knew I always had to live alone.

4. Connection to place.

Day one
24. The shelter is a sapling dome shape covered with an old parachute and has an airtight shelter in it for warmth, foam pads for a bed, I have no fear yet and doubt that I will as this place feels very comforting to me.
34. As I write I go our periodically to see the outside, pitch black with the stars popping out and the lantern's light of the shelter looking so inviting.
36. I will miss this place.
Other statements: 38.

Day three
5. Odd how this seems to depress me.
6. This place has quickly become a sort of home and if I'm going to be here another day I don't want to move.
15. As down as I was about leaving I'm more than elated with the new camp, its so beautiful and serene here.
17. Almost wish I were staying longer in the new place.

5. Boredom and frustration.

Day two
38. Bored wish I had a book.
39. Can't play the guitar any more my fingers hurt!

6. Thoughts about nature and man.

Day one
27. Nature in its simplicity uncomplicated by the ignorance of man.
32. As wonderful as some people are,we can be such a cruel destructive species.
33. The contrasts never cease to amaze me, I still believe we are all basically good but stupid oh yes.

7. The elements.

Day two
1. Weather is still beautiful.
18. I feel the warm breeze on my face and can't believe how lucky I am, with the weather.

Day three
8. The wind is blowing so strongly across the lake that if I stand on my skis I actually begin to move and get blown.

8. Time.

Day two
2. Since the watch is back at the van time has no meaning just another way of relieving the stress of our everyday lives.
16. Time moves slow in some ways, I count the time until my solo is finished.
Other statements: Day three, 7.

9. Appreciation.

Day three
24. I feel so fortunate to have come.
25. The weather was great the place was wonderful.
32. I have so much to be thankful for
33. I guess I'd just like to go home and

	appreciate those things and people.
10. Invasion of solitude.	Day two 12. Far off on the lake I see a car on the ice with a couple of people fishing. 13. I turn away from their direction. 14. I almost resent them being there. 15. I feel no desire to see anyone.
11. Putting things in perspective.	Day three 30. Somehow with the stresses of work, relationships and everyday life things can come temporarily off the rails. 31. These three days have put things back in proper perspective.
12. Descriptions of nature.	Day two 6. Went for two long walks around the lake. 17. Just back from another walk to see the animal tracks, the birds, the sky. 19. The smells of the woods permeate my nostrils, left over fire from my stove, the moisture from the melting snow. 21. Off for another ski to watch the sunset and take pictures. Other statements: 22 and 28. Day three 1. Lying in bed early morning, realizing its like a little city out there, squirrels chattering and birds singing. 2. All these little creatures going about their business and soon it's quie except for the wind and the trees.
13. Recognition of lack of time for self in day to	Day one 4. As with most things in my life I'm so day living.busy I rarely have time to dwell on them before they begin. 15. Other reasons for thinking that I

wouldn't go on the solo was just making the time from my hectic pace.

Day two

32. Haven't been much good at slowing down the last couple of years I guess.

14. Reflects on the world outside.

Day two

26. Can't help but ponder a little over what's happening in the Persian Gulf.
27. Hope all is well.

Day three

21. Kind of curious what's been going on
while I've been gone, the Persian Gulf, work, the Oilers.
22. Ah well it really doesn't matter.

15. Thoughts of the future.

Day one

25. In some ways I fear going home.

Day two

34. Re-wrote my will, not a morose time just something that needed to be done.

16. Attunement to sounds and the great silence.

Day one

21. Every now and then I stop to listen to the incredible silence.
22. The crunch of the snow on my boots and the sound of my little stove appear deafening in contrast.

Day two

35. The wind is picking up and whistling through the trees.
36. The whistle from a couple of trains heard previously remind me of camping in Jasper when I was a kid.

17. Darkness.

Day one

23. I take a short walk on the lake as darkness falls and finally head inside my shelter.
42. Taking a look around the night sky the beauty all around makes me feel good.
43. That perhaps there is a purpose, a reason for this all.
44. It's far too complex and wonderful to have just happened.
45. I believe I won't ever understand man's or my part in this world,however I don't have to know, I'll wonder occasionally but I'm sure it is unravelling the way it should and I don't need to worry.

TABLE 4 - SECOND ORDER CLUSTERS OF THEMES

THEMATIC CLUSTER HEADING	THEME STATEMENTS
1. Personal growth and self-discovery.	1. Solo as a process to get in touch with self. 2. Return to simplicity. 3. Thoughts and feelings about solitude. 4. Boredom and frustration. 5. Appreciation. 6. Invasion of solitude. 7. Recognition of lack of time for self in daily life. 8. Thoughts about the future.
2. Encountering the meaningful presence of nature.	1. Feelings of connection to place 2.Thoughts about man's relationship to nature. 3. The elements. 4. Descriptions of nature 5. Attunement to sounds, and the great silence. 6. Darkness. 7. Reflects on the global situation.

INTERPRETIVE SYNTHESIS OF TIM'S SOLO EXPERIENCE

PERSONAL GROWTH AND SELF-DISCOVERY

Tim's initial apprehension about the solo experience subsided quickly. One beautiful January morning he called me and said that it was time and that he was ready to go. There was a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm, he was very positive about his upcoming solo. I could hear it in his voice. The night before there had been some doubts and realizations that the nights would be long and dark, and that there may be some difficulties. This morning I was talking to a man with no doubts and ready to meet any difficulties that may arise. He heads out to his solo site on an unusually warm January day.

When he arrived at his solo site and is alone he begins to reflect upon the events that led him to the solo. He realized that at last he is here, in the middle of nowhere, typically there had been little time to think about things up until now.

Throughout the solo, Tim's journal became a very valuable outlet of self-expression, it was almost like having someone to talk to, as reflected in his words. "Writing the journal was like talking to someone, it was a sharing with self, especially at times when the experience needed to be shared". During the solo Tim seemed to be constantly in touch with his inner state, as well as being intensely aware of the life around him. In solitude, he was able to see "nature in its simplicity, un-complicated by the amazing ignorance of man". For him the return to simplicity was a joy and he found pleasure in simple things. When he was not involved with collecting water, chopping wood or exploring nature and the surrounding area, he seemed to slip into a very reflective philosophical mode.

It was during these reflective times that many interesting thoughts arose. First, there was the realization of aloneness, that even when not in solitude, that human beings are ultimatey alone. Tim viewed aloneness in a positive light in that even though human beings are ultimately alone in his view we are constantly, "inter-twining with other human beings on the journey". This realization of one's ultimate aloneness was not an unpleasant or painful one, as in solitude Tim felt a connection to all other living things and felt equal to them.

At times, the vastness of the night sky studded with stars was almost overwhelming. Tim described himself as feeling, "...significantly insignificant...a small but important part".

In solitude, Tim's senses became heightened. Many references are made to this increased sensory awareness, especially the sounds. "Every now and then I stop and listen to the incredible silence. The crunch of the snow under my boots and the sound of my little stove appear deafening in contrast". There are also many times when the sound of the wind breaks the silence.

The first evening, Tim was very comfortable and spent time beside his fire writing and reflecting, interspersed with time outside the shelter watching the sky and staring at the stars. The process of healing and self nurturance had begun.

> As I write I go out periodically to see the outside, pitch black with the stars popping out. The lantern's light in the shelter looks so inviting. I'm feeling better now than I've felt in a long time. I will miss this place.

The night sky and surrounding beauty promote a good feeling and spark further philosophical thought and questioning. Tim

seemed to lose himself in thought whilst staring at the sky.

> Taking a look around, the night sky, the beauty all around me makes me feel good. That perhaps there is a reason for this all. It is far too complex and wonderful to have just happened. I believe I won't ever understand man's or my part in this world, however I don't have to know, I'll wonder occasionally but I'm sure it is unravelling the way it should and I don't need to worry.

ENCOUNTERING THE MEANINGFUL PRESENCE OF NATURE

In the morning of the second day, Tim noticed that time is no longer important. In the wilderness one can quickly move away from clocks and deadlines that seem to be imposed upon us in our daily lives. For Tim, time became almost meaningless. "Since the watch is back in the van, time has no meaning". And yet, paradoxically, he also became very conscious of the passage of time. "Time moves slow in some ways".

As Tim started to feel closer to nature and to see his connection to the whole, he felt that he was no longer truly alone. He was surrounded by other living things that he felt equal to. "Short walk to the lake, the solitude is there and slows me down". Tim's reference here to "the solitude", seems to personify solitude in such a way as to say that it is not always there, at times it is felt more intensely than others. The quote also implies a certain sense of peace that is offered by what he finds and feels down at the lake.

As his time alone became increasingly more comfortable, enjoyable and prized, Tim started to reflect on the conditions of his solitude. He realized that it would be different if he always had to be alone. It is the knowledge of impermanence of this kind of solitude

that makes it so refreshing. It was also a self chosen solitude, which differs from solitude that has been enforced upon a person. "I know that this is a break and that makes it easier to enjoy, I don't think it would necessarily be the same if I knew I always had to live alone". During this period of reflection, Tim also saw the other side of the balance. He recognized that sitting opposite solitude in the balance is a need to be with people. "We all need people, we are a very social species".

For three days and three nights, Tim had consciously gone off to be by himself. To be alone with nature, to expand awareness about self and to slow down to natural rhythms. Any distraction from this solitude is almost considered a personal invasion. "...I see a car on the ice with a couple of people fishing. I turn away from their direction. I almost resent them being there. I feel no desire to see anyone".

Personal space seems to be important in wilderness solitude. Perhaps it is relative; the more we have, the more we expect. One often feels very protective of a place that one has chosen for a period of solitude. Even visual sightings of other people, as in Tim's case, can disturb the flow of solo.

For the last day and night he moved his camp to a new spot. Quickly there was an attachment to this new place. "It's so beautiful and serene". During the last evening Tim sat by his fire writing and reflecting. He reflected on the differences in his temperament and mood since coming on the solo. "I left an agitated person and am returning a peaceful and serene one". The solo also allowed him to see things in perspective. "These three days have put things back in proper perspective". Not only did the solo allow him to put things in perspective but he also felt that it was a physical, spiritual and

emotional cleansing.

Upon Tim's return from solo we met and discussed his experience at length. He was able to articulate his thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the solo in such a way that I got a real feel for how his experience was. He felt that solo was an opening up of self to others and the world. The opening up is part of the process of self healing. Along with it comes a certain gentleness and patience with self, a kind of self nurturance. There is also an evaluation as well as an appreciation of relationships. All these factors combine to help give the soloist an expanded awareness of self.

INITIAL MEETING WITH NICOLE

I met Nicole for the first time in the middle of January. Her mother wanted me to meet her to talk to her about the Outdoor Education program at the university. As when I have met other people who have become close, there was immediately a spark that we seemed to recognize in one another, a kindred spirit, something in a past life? We had only half an hour together. Nicole's interest of going into the wilderness solo came out very quickly. I immediately identified her as an excellent co-researcher and invited her to join my study. She responded with much interest and enthusiasm.

Wilderness solo is an experience that Nicole has consciously sought on many other occasions. It is my perception that solo is, for her, a renewing experience where she can tap her creativity in the simplicity that it requires to surface.

Nicole discussed her interest in the outdoors and her love for writing. She is at present writing a book. Our first meeting was unfortunately very brief, I would have liked to talk with her a lot longer. My first impression was that Nicole did not look like an outdoor person. I have to learn not to stereotype! After my class, Nicole met me and presented me with five written pages on her expectations of the solo she was about to do, and her reasons for doing solos. I had faith that she would be able to illuminate the phenomenon as in the short time that I had spent with her I saw that shewas extremely articulate and communicated thoughts and feelings well on paper.

Through my brief meeting with Nicole, we were able to discover that we had a lot in common. During our successive meetings, we shared a lot of our experiences and beliefs. Soon our

relationship had developed into a very trusting and comfortable friendship. Time spent together was always interesting and a pleasure, occasionally it seemed that the research had almost become secondary.

TABLE 5 - FIRST ORDER CLUSTERS OF THEMES

THEMATIC CLUSTER HEADING	THEME STATEMENTS
1. Getting in touch with self.	Pre Solo 1. I do solo's because they allow me to get more in touch with me. 2. In the woods time slows down, becomes fluid, my thoughts become fluid also. 5. When these basic needs are met my soul is free to wander in the woods. 13. I can retain a sense of what is ultimately important for me. 14. And when I catch myself confused, cramped and thwarted, I return to the bush and all over again learn some new but basic, truth. 18. I'm always discovering something hidden. Other statements: 57, 58, 59,60, and 70.
2. Connection and closeness to other living things.	Pre Solo 5. My soul is free to wander in the woods and observe nature's creations. 6. To listen to the song of life. 7. I need to feel the living things around me. Day 2 11. I build lean tos so I can better share the wilderness with the creatures in it.

Other statements: 35, 36, 39, 43, 47,51, 52, 61, 75, 76, 77, and 93.

Day 3
4. I love the wind.
5. It blew all the clouds and several times before I woke up to stare at the stars.
17. I went for a walk, a long walk to see the sun better.
Other statements: 11, 13, 14, 17, 32, 34, 40, and 43.

3. Solo as a meditation.

Day 2
99. I'm going to meditate now.

Day 3
10. I just came back and started to meditate, one of the little birds landedon my wrist.
27. I was just meditating.
36. Maybe I should meditate more if animals keep showing up.

4. Attunement to senses:
a) Sounds.

Day 1
5. The first thing I noticed was the bird chatter.
16. I really miss the sound of the wind in the treetops and the gentle rustling of leaves.
Other statements: 3.

Day 2
74. The fire sounds lovely. It is cracking and popping and spitting from all the water and snow.
Other statements: 2, 32, 33, 56, and 91.

Day 3
9. The wind is very noisy and strong. It roars. It sounds like summer all over again with the swaying treetops.Maybe it sounds like the ocean.

Other statements: 3 and 9.

b) Sights.

Day 1
Other statements: 12, 13, and 14.

Day 2
46. There are birds everywhere, the woods
are alive with them.
75. I caught a tiny movement at the edge of my eye sight as I sat staring into the flames.
Other statements: 12, 13, 17, and 47.

Day 3
28. I opened my eyes and saw a cow moose in front of me.
Other statements: 21 and 26.

c) Smells.

Day 1
10. There isn't that camp woody smell in the air like there is in winter.
11. There's very little smell.

5. Appreciation.

Day 1
1. This is great.

Day 2
54. The birds make me smile.
84. That was a nice fire.
Other statements: 65, 83, and 89.

Day 3
15. I had a good night yesterday.
29. She was so beautiful. (sighting a moose)
Other statements: 16, 20, and 33.

6. Attention to physical feelings.

Day 2
15. I felt quite cold.
41. I'm feeling quite warm, I shed a couple of articles of clothing.
Day 3
6. I felt so warm last night I had to open

	my sleeping bag a little. 32. Cold, I gave up.
7. Darkness and light.	Day 2 1. Spidery black trees against a setting sun. Day 3 23. It was so much darker in the valley, no sun, probably doesn't catch any rays until late afternoon. 38. The sun is hiding in a grey haze again. In two more hours it will be dark. 45. It was a long night waiting for the sun to show its face. 46. As soon as the sky began to lighten I woke up several times.
8. Change in time perception.	Pre Solo 2. In the woods time slows down,becomes fluid.
9. Satisfaction of basic needs and simplicity.	Pre Solo 5. When these simple basic needs are satisfied my soul is free to wander in the woods. 15. If I want happiness, I must look for simplicity. 16. If I want wisdom I have only to satisfy those basic needs and then sit back and enjoy the song of life. Day 2 38. It is time to collect more wood and secure my lean to. 71. It's fire time, I'm thirsty and chilled. 78. I'm content that my lean to will be warmer tonight. 81. Alright!! I've got warm hot water. Yeah! Yippie! I'm making herbal tea. Other statements: 16, 78, 79, and 80.10.

10.Description of closeness to nature.	Day 2 18. It's a hazy grey day the sun is barely filtering through. 94. The sky finally broke up. Day 3 18. I went into a small but fairly long valley and climbed a hill. Then I sat down on bare rock on a precipice and looked around at the valley, the sun and the lake. The wind was so strong up there. Other statements: 20.
11. Reflection to past events.	Day 2 3. I thought about a story when I was in Banff about a coyote. 20. Only once did I ever feel so yucky. 31. I'm thinking about Alberta Wildlife Park, when I used to walk there. 32. I remember hearing a baby camel moan for its mother. 42. I'm remembering when I went camping on Cascade mountain. 49. I remember ...(a story). 50. I've always been saving bugs since I was a kid. Other statements: 26, 34, 36, 37, 45, 48, 49, 67, and 98.
12. Future.	Day 2 62. I'm looking forward to the coming year. 86. I'm looking forward to my birthday party at the Commercial on Saturday. Other statements: 90 and 97. Day 3 39. Tomorrow I go home but not without a few regrets. Other statements: 39.
13. Primordial Fear.	Day 2 5. I unzipped my sleeping bag and took

out my hatchet, flashlight laying beside me.
7. I lay tensed, every cell keened to listen.
10. It was frightening.
44. What I'm really afraid of is man,who knows what kind of psychopath or drugged hiker you might meet? I wear a knife strapped to my leg because of that.

Other statements: 4.

14. Reference to Elements.

Day 3
24. The wind is unbelievable relentless.
25. The snow comes up to mid thigh in places.
48. I found that temperatures had dropped to about -15 last night. The wind hadgotten as strong as 70 km/hr. It was quite fierce.

15. Gratitude and Happiness.

Day 1
9. The sun is very bright and I'm so grateful for that.
21. The fire spirits help and I express my gratitude with the just burst of flame.

Day 2
53. I'm starting to enjoy my time here more.
82. That's what I love about the bush, you're so grateful for the tiny things.

Day 3
1. I wake up feeling very happy. It's rare when you wake up smiling.
35. I'm so grateful to have seen that moose.
47. I broke camp feeling very bright and alert.

A further reduction of the themes led me to grouping all of the first order clusters under one of two second order headings.

TABLE 6 - SECOND ORDER CLUSTERS OF THEMES

THEMATIC CLUSTER HEADING	THEME STATEMENTS
1. Primordial connection - World	1. Connection and closeness to other living things. 2. Observations of nature. Themes within these two include feelings of a closeness to Godsource, description of thoughts flowing with sunlight, a feeling of renewal and return to the truth. 3. Satisfaction of basic needs and simplicity.
2. Perceptual/affective shift - Self.	1. Primordial fear. 2. References to elements. 3. Gratitude and happiness. 4. Attunement to senses. a) Sights b) Sounds c) Smells d) Physical feelings 5. Increased awareness of darkness and light. 6. Change in time perception. 7. Increased awareness/getting in touch with self. 8. Reflections to past/future. 9. Meditative quality of solo. 10. Appreciation.

INTERPRETIVE SYNTHESIS OF NICOLE'S EXPERIENCE

Nicole seemed to have a constsnt internal dialogue that she wrote down very descriptively. Her thoughts seemed to flow freely from one thing to the next. She often lost herself in thought and almost leaves her situation. Reading her journal was like being on a journey with her. Thoughts of past events and experiences are sparked by things that happen at the time, and a past event is recounted. After which she would return to the present and notice something that needed attention, for example the fire. NIcole constantly noticed and made reference to the life going on around her. She was really in touch with the animal life in the area that she had chosen to be. Many references are made to birds, insects, squirrels, and other forms of life. Nicole during her solo developed a rapport and understanding with the animals that she was sharing her place with. References to sounds are also common throughout her protocol. There is occassionally the sound of a passing train which she finds disturbing. This represented an intrusion of man, the very thing she had come to escape. The sun also played a very important part for Nicole during her solo. Not only did it bring light and warmth, but also it was like a companion to her.

PERCEPTUAL/ AFFECTIVE SHIFT

This is characterized by a heightened perceptual awareness. Nicole's sense of sight, sound, and smell appeared to come to life and were highly receptive during her solo. Perhaps in the peace and stillness of solitude our senses are no longer bombarded with thousands of messages that we automatically filter out. Rather, in the woods in solitude, it suddenly seems like for the first time one can

hear the wind, watch the birds and smell the weather changing. This heightened sensory awareness was exciting for Nicole and she felt like she was constantly being given wonderful gifts from nature. She talks about hearing wolves one night. "But the wolves. Oh they grabbed me in the throat and made me want to cry for the beauty of it".

Also with this perceptual/affective shift came an increased feeling of pleasure and satisfaction from small things. Along with this comes a paying attention to small details that become very important. Nicole was very grateful for small things which normally may appear insignificant. Happiness seemed to radiate from all living things. This is echoed in her comment, "the birds make me smile". Emotions and fears are also heightened in this context.

The outdoors appear to affect all of the senses. Perhaps this is why the outdoors is such a powerful learning environment. The whole being is involved when one is in nature. As the whole being is involved there is an increased awareness of self, a discovery of things hidden. In solitude, Nicole felt that she was able to "get in touch with herself". This self discovery is one of many perceptual experiences the meditative quality of solo allows. It is a perfect time to discover parts of self through contemplation and reflection.
"Regular periods of reflection and quiet invite me to slow down so that I may respond to who I am and who I am becoming" (Agnes, 1986, p.50).

When entering the wilderness for a period of solitude, Mother Nature takes me by the hand and leads me gently back to myself. Solo is an opportunity where one can listen to the inner rhythms and become more in touch through silence with the inner world.

Watching the inner world is a passive meditation that can lead to an increase in self awareness. Self awareness involves knowing myself, being honest with myself, knowing why I behave as I do, feeling comfortable with myself, being clear and open with self, respecting self, feeling significant and competent, liking who I am. Self-awareness makes living more graceful (Schultz, 1975). The meditative quality of solo is such that just being and doing simple things become joyful. Even small, apparently insignificant acts take on meaning. There is a feeling of fullness of living.

> For the first time he understood what meditation is...not that you sit for a special time and repeat a mantra, not that you go to the church or to the temple or to the mosque, but to be in life....to go on doing trivial things, but with such absorption that the profundity is revealed in every action. He could feel it. He could almost have touched it" (Rajneesh 1983, p.7).

PRIMORDIAL CONNECTION-SELF/WORLD

This is characterized by a feeling of wholeness and unity with all living things. It is an experience of co-constitutionality, a connectedness of self with everything all around. Nicole talks about the primordial connection in her own words.

> When I am in the wilderness and amongst the wild creatures I feel closer to whatever Godsource exists. There is a divinity in all wild things, I like to think. And its better than religion.

This experience of being an interdependent part of all that exists and the feeling of a spiritual connection is mirrored in the deep

ecological consciousness. The term 'deep ecology' was coined by Arne Naess in 1973. It is an attempt to describe a deeper more spiritual approach to nature. Naess thought that this deeper approach resulted from a more sensitive openness to ourselves and nonhuman life around us.

> The foundations of deep ecology are the basic intuitions and experiencing of ourselves and nature...In keeping with the spiritual traditions of many of the world's religions, the deep ecology norm of self-realization goes beyond the modern western self which is defined as an isolated ego striving primarily for hedonistic gratification or for a narrow sense of individual salvation in this life or the next. This narrow sense of self dislocates us and we are robbed of beginning the search for our unique spiritual/biological personhood. The deep ecology sense of self requires a further maturity and growth, an identification which goes beyond humanity to include the nonhuman world. Seeing beyond our narrow contemporary cultural assumptions and values is best achieved by this meditative deep questioning process. Only in this way can we hope to achieve full mature personhood and uniqueness...(Devall & Sessions, 1985, p.67).

The realization and acceptance of this undeniable connection that we have with the earth and all living things is essential to the cultivation of a deep ecological consciousness. It is a belief that every living thing, microbe, plant, rainforest, whale, mountain, river, and so on has a spirit that we are connected to. It would

appear that solo is an ideal time to foster and embrace these beliefs. Through living closely with nature Nicole, found that she was more able to get in touch with herself. "I need to feel living things around me, maybe I need to reflect back to an inner world that requires a visible manifestation."

In the words of Devall andSessions (1985, p.67), "becoming a whole person can be summarized symbolically as the realization of 'self in self' where 'self' stands for organic wholeness."

These two main themes that make up the essence of Nicole's solo experience perceptual/affective shift and primordial connection, I will now call self and the world respectively. The solo experience is one of co-constitutionality and a realization of the connectedness of self with everything all around. The two main emerging themes are therefore, not separate but interlinked and interdependent. Solo is a reciprocal relationship between the world and the individual. I impact the world and the world impacts me. These characteristics are very similar to those that Maslow describes as a peak-experience.

> It is quite characteristic in peak-experiences that the whole universe is perceived as an integrated and unified whole. The universe is all of a piece and one has a place in it - one is part of it, one belongs in it - this can be so profound and shaking an experience that it can change the person's character.
>
> The cognition that comes in peak-experiences is also similar to the perceptual shift experienced during solo. There is tremendous concentration of a kind that does not normally occur. There is the trust and most total kind of visual perceiving or listening or feeling. There is a tendency for things to become equally

> important rather than to be arranged in a hierarchy from very important to quite unimportant (Maslow, 1970, p.60).

The similarities between Maslow's peak-experience and the solo experience are striking. It is often as if Maslow is referring directly to the solo when he is talking about the peak experience. "The peak-experience is felt as a self validating, self-justifying moment which carries its own intrinsic value with it. It is so great an experience that even to attempt to justify it takes away from its dignity and worth" (Maslow, 1970, p.62). Maslow believes that peak-experiences can make life worthwhile by their occasional occurrence. They give meaning to life itself. He goes on to state that peak-experiences help to prevent suicide. Does this then mean that the solo experiences could potentially have a role in suicide prevention?

> In the peak-experience, there is a very characteristic disorientation in time and space, or even the lack of consciousness of time and space. Phrased positively, this is like experiencing universality and eternity. This kind of timelessness and spacelessness contrasts very sharply with normal experience. The person in the peak-experience may feel a day passing as if it were minutes or also a minute so intensely lived that it might feel like a day or a year or an eternity even. He may also lose his consciousness of being located in a particular place...cognition in the peak-experience is much more passive and receptive, much more humble then normal perception is. It is much more ready to listen and much more able to hear (Maslow, 1970,

p.63).

This passive receptive cognition that one takes on during peak experience is similar to the heightened perceptual awareness during solo. Nicole calls it "listening to the song of life." During her solo, she also experienced the sense of timelessness that is characteristic during peak-experience. This is reflected in Nicole's words "time slows down, becomes fluid...my thoughts become fluid also, paradoxically crystalline". There is also a feeling of wholeness, unity with all things and a groundedness. Self is no longer seen as separate from the world.

Wilderness solitude could therefore, be said to affect the way we see and feel about the world and ourselves. It is an experience where there can potentially be human growth through living closely with nature.

INITIAL MEETING WITH DAN

I first met Dan at the university, it was not long after I had arrived from Scotland. He had a keen interest in hearing about life outside Canada, and explained that upon completing his degree he wanted to travel. We were both members of an outdoor group, Explorations, so we would often talk extensively about our interests in the outdoors. In common, we had the desire to pursue unique and meaningful experiences.

When the idea of exploring wilderness solitude as a research topic came to be, Dan seemed like an obvious choice for a co-researcher. In his ever constant pursuit of challenge and experience, a period of solitude in a wilderness setting was not one that he had met before.

Discussing the experience with Dan brought many different perspectives of solitude to mind. Initially for Dan, the main purpose for doing a solo was that it was a challenge. He was very interested to see how he would think and feel when completely alone. It was his perception that when we are constantly with people, our real selves become masked and hidden under a routine set of behaviours. This would be an opportunity for him to gain a better understanding of himself, and to experience his uniqueness fully.

Having been a person who always enjoyed the outdoors and the wilderness, solitude, he felt, would be a discovery of how close it really was to his heart. Realizing that there would be nothing to occupy his time, he felt that creativity would surface in this environment. In addition to this, there was anticipation that feeling of being connected to the whole or "being part of it" would emerge from a solitary venture.

Dan expressed no fears, he did however mention that he hoped he would not "freak from thinking too much." He anticipated being "mentally burnt-out" upon return from the solo experience, as he believed it would be an intense time of self observation and quest for self understanding. This is not to say that it would not be an enjoyable experience for him, he was sure it would be. At the same time he was also aware that the process of self questioning can sometimes be a painful one.

Our discussion moved to experiences in general and how some things can be read about and understood, whilst others can be experienced instinctively or intuitively, wilderness solitude seemed to fall into neither of these categories. We agreed that this phenomenon could not easily be experienced through words, it needed to be explained through direct experience.

TABLE 7 - FIRST ORDER CLUSTERS OF THEMES

THEMATIC CLUSTER HEADING	THEME STATEMENTS
1. Attunement to inner world of feelings, moods and needs.	Day one 1. Well the journey has begun. 4. My first thoughts were one's of confidence, and envy that others would hold towards me. Day two 32. But right now for the hell of it, I do what I do for excitement, inner pleasure and personal satisfaction. 33. Experiences are what life is all about, and not a routine set of them. 34. I feel I need to experience everything I can possibly get my hands on. 35. Not just countries or activities, but challenges for the mental and cognitive side of me. 36. So I know how far I can push or motivate myself to conquer what is laid before me, all a personal choice never is the scenario a forced situation. 37. If I can't benefit or have a purpose or goal for doing an activity or quest, then of course you don't do them. Day three 8. My mood has been varied, tired and low energy so instead of fighting it and trying to accomplish a major ski, I'm going to sit back by the fire and relax, ponder some thoughts. 15. This is one time in a while where I can honestly say that I crave a doobie to puff upon. 22. To become totally immersed in self I

feel a longer duration is required and in a warmer climate.

2. Imagination.

Day one

19. I feel like an early explorer seeking wild places and discoveries wild and tame.

Day two

10. In the distance there seems to be a dead animal on the pass because there are tracks leading up the pass then a large black mass resembling a deer or something. The more I stare the more clear the picture becomes.
16. Anything that can live at such a high elevation is an animal which I would like to be re-incarnated as, what a cool life.

3. Darkness.

Day one

26. Night has fallen and I sit in my cabin for the next three days close to a burning fire that crackles and sizzles away into the night.
37. Tonight I choose to sleep by the fire, so tomorrow I can utilize all the daylight to explore the upper Kananaskis, which brings up another point relating to light and dark.
38. The dark has refrained me from doing any lengthy night ski.
41. At times in the dark of the night I feelparanoid of being watched not by animals but by some other form.

Day two

38. Night, and with the approach of darkness my thoughts become more defined.
39. The mood I have held the entire day is very strong at this point with ideas about my future more strong and descriptive.

4. Hope/expectations.	Day one 40. Hope for the best, prepare for the worst, expect nothing. Day two 40. My desire to travel and explore is an idea which I know I will do in the next couple of months. Day three 16. I sit here on my last night contemplating my future decisions and trying to get a focus. 17. Something obtainable in life.
5. Tiredness.	Day one 34. Time for a nap, I feel bushed after a week of powder thrashing. Day two 3. Lately I've been sleeping a lot, but I think I needed it. 17. I can't believe I slept so long what a waste as I sit here and take in the scenery and sunshine.
6. Happiness.	Day one 7. The feeling of happiness spread over me as I thought of the next three days and what I will do to satisfy myself. Day three 9. No one is around for miles and for now I'm happy and content with where I'm at.
7. Descriptions of nature.	Day two 4. Today I write from a rock ledge about 2000 feet up from Turbine Cabin, overlooking Kananaskis Pass. 16. I began examining the rock with small worm like crustaceons. 24. I can see Bealty glacier the one we climbed the other day, from here it

looks like a total freak show, it looks so steep in the shadows.

8. Isolation/aloneness.

Day one

2. The only way to get into Turbine Cabin is by helicopter or by French/Haig glaciers (15 km from Smith Doreen parking lot) or upper Kananaskis lakes trail which is roughly 23 kms long.
3. So yes I presently am isolated.
5. I skied about one kilometre and could see not a soul.
18. I felt alone and comfortable.
22. I feel alone and content about my whereabouts.
28. The concept of aloneness that rides over me makes me feel comfortable,but at the same time many thoughts race through my mind as to how one could slowly become obsessed with being alone and drop out of society completely.
30. Humans need other humans to support their own way of thinking and actions.
31. If everyone would start off life experiencing what interested them instead of what is forced upon them, then being alone would be an integral part of life instead of a burden.
32. Always in circumstances such as solo you feel good about yourself.
34. Setting out to accomplish a goal and a challenge such as solo one is able to see how they act when not under the pressure or influence of others.
39. I'm sure if someone else was here I would be out the door in a second.

Day two

22. I feel alive and happy, alone but not lonely, conquering what many would

fear to do.
30. Something such as a solo makes me feel very strong and content.
31. I look at it this way, who else would be sitting in a similar situation about 9000 feet in elevation besides gurus and monks.

Day three
19. Tonight I stand outside gazing at the shadowy moon, listening for... nothing is heard except the crunching of snow beneath my feet.

9. The elements.

Day one
6. I had to descend the Haig glacier in white out conditions.
8. The mountain tops began to disappear in the obscured sky, the white out had gotten worse and so did my feelings.
14. I sat upon this ridge that avalanched the valley and pondered as thesnow and wind scoured my face.
17. The sun began beaming through the clouds and the before non existent mountains began to sprout up all around.
23. It is snowing outside and the sun is trying hard to enter the windows of the cabin.

Day two
1. I awoke to the sun shining it's so quiet, nothing to be bothered by. The sun was already in the west which made it afternoon.
5. Some type of weather system is moving in from the west.
19. For now being high up, and with the wind picking up, I truly feel alive.
28. It's so quiet, myself and the wind.

Day three

1. Today is overcast and snowing putting somewhat of a damper on my plans to go to Three Isle lake.
2. Maybe it is because of the gloomy conditions but I don't feel like much of a ski today.

9.Sun is out now so I shall go and cut wood.

10. Anxiety.

Day one

9. Feelings of caution swept over me.
11. I had head slightly off route.I began to be more cautious than I had been all that week.
12. I grabbed hold of the situation and slowly began to build more confidence as I skied the remaining slope of the glacier.
13. Always on my mind is what if.?

Day two

27. My mind is in a constant rush, I've sat here writing now I want to be over there or up higher, I need to mellow out and enjoy the precious time before it is over.

Day three

3. One re-occurring thought is the things I need to do back in the real world, I don't seem to be able to just turn off and enjoy things for the time alotted to them.

Day four

1. Departure day and I'm standing below Haig glacier sweating and freaking out.
2. It's another white out, and on the way up I used stone ridges for markers they are now covered in snow.
3. So I can't see a fucking thing.
4. I've motored to here and am seriously considering what a fucked idea to be

	alone. 5. I would be screwed if anything let go from above. 6. Adrenalin and freaking out !
11. Appreciation	<u>Day two</u> 23. Aahh the Great White North.
	<u>Day three</u> 26. A good day.
12. Time.	<u>Day three</u> 5. Time is another consideration even though I do not have a watch, time seems to be constantly on my mind. 6. About four hours until sunset or it's seven am, time to get up. 18. The experience of the solo has slowed down the clock to only things that are of grave importance.

This table illustrates how the first order clusters of themes were reduced into two dominant, emerging second order themes.

TABLE 8 - SECOND ORDER CLUSTERS OF THEMES FROM DAN'S PROTOCOL

THEMATIC CLUSTER HEADING	THEME STATEMENTS
1. Experiencing self	1. Attunement to inner world 2. Imagination. 3. Hope and expectations. 4. Tiredness. 5. Happiness. 6. Isolation and aloneness. 7. Anxiety. 8. Appreciation.
2. Experiencing nature.	1. Darkness. 2. Descriptions of nature. 3. The elements.

Time is a theme that will be discussed as a part of both of these categories. It does not remain outside of either of them, yet it is not exclusive to one thematic cluster. It will be discussed as a bridge between the two.

INTERPRETIVE SYNTHESIS OF DAN'S SOLO EXPERIENCE

For Dan, his time in solitude was to be a spontaneous adventure, doing whatever he desired or what he needed to do to feel some sense of accomplishment and feel good about himself. Dan initially saw the solo experience as a challenge to be met and conquered. His chosen site for the period of solitude was in a remote area of Kananaskis country.

EXPERIENCING NATURE

To get into this area in January required a technical back country ski in. As Dan was travelling to the area the weather conditions became unfavourable. In this situation, his mind started to fill with doubt as he imagined all the possible accidents that could happen in such an area.

When he arrived at his destination his concern was over. He was happy to have arrived at the cabin where he would spend three days and three nights. Interestingly he writes, "well the journey has begun," after his arrival at the cabin, implying that the real journey is the self in solitude, and not the gruelling physical journey that he had just completed. Dan was sharply conscious of his isolation and the effects that it would have upon his moods and perceptions. At this stage he was very content and wrote, "the feeling of happiness spread over me as I thought of the next three days and what I will do to satisfy myself." Sitting outside the cabin his thoughts started to flow and he questioned himself. He quickly became agitated, and so blocked these thoughts out by focusing on the nature around him.

> Why the hell am I in such a rush to decide what I will do for a career, or about the ski tour I will do

> tomorrow. I blocked it all out and began examining the rock with small worm like crustaceons. The sun began beaming through the clouds and the before non-existent mountains began to sprout up all around. I felt alone and comfortable.

This experiencing of nature in solitude seemed to bring out a creative side in Dan that he had not recognized in himself before. Again he re-confirmed his contentment about being on his own. "I feel alone and content about my whereabouts. It's snowing outside and the sun is trying hard to enter the windows of the cabin." This implies a certain closeness and connection to nature, almost as if the sun had deliberately set out to seek Dan and for that moment existed in no other place. There was just Dan and the sun struggling to reach him.

Darkness draws in without warning. Dusk, the time when daylight meets the darkness, fails to arrive in the mountains, instead darkness falls quickly and silently like a thief, announcing an abrupt end to the day. For D the arrival of the darkness was a hinderance and robbed him of the light he needed to carry out his activities. "The darkness has refrained me from doing any lengthy night ski." Dan was not completely comfortable with the total darkness that night, there was some fear that in the blackness he was being watched by something unknown. "At times in the dark of the night I feel paranoid of being watched, not by an animal but by some other form."

During the second evening, the arrival of the darkness was less threatening and more of an opportunity for clear thought and reflection. "Night, and with the approach of darkness my thoughts become more defined." This evening the darkness brings with it an

atmosphere where Dan feels strong about the future. "The mood I have held the entire day is very strong at this point with ideas about my future more strong and descriptive."

Dan's constant quest for new experiences pushed him to experience nature to the full. He wrote, "today I write from a rock ledge about 2000 feet up, I can see Bealty glacier the one we climbed the other day, from here it looks like a total freak show, it looks so steep in the shadows."

Through experiencing nature so closely and so intensely Dan became aware of how it affected his moods and feelings. "The mountain tops began to disappear in the obscured sky, the white out had gotten worse and so did my feelings." He sat for a while and allowed the elements to wash over him as he stared out over the valley and thought: "I sat upon this ridge that avalanched the valley and pondered as the snow and wind scoured my face." He sat long enough to watch the mountains being engulfed by clouds and re-appearing again. The following day he awoke to be welcomed to the new day by the sun and the pervading silence. "I awoke to the sun shining it's so quiet, nothing to be bothered by." He realized that the sun is in the west which made it afternoon already. Dan immediately felt bad about having wasted time in sleep. "I can't believe I slept so long what a waste as I sit here and take in the scenery and sunshine." In his situation he found it extremely difficult to push thoughts of time from his mind. "Time is another consideration, even though I do not have a watch, time seems to be constantly on my mind. About four hours to sunset, or it must be time to get up..." Gradually, as his being became immersed in the tranquil pace of solitude, his preoccupation with time slips effortlessly from his mind. "The experience of the solo has slowed down the clock to only things that

are of grave importance."

Sitting on a rock overlooking the mountains and valley he watched a weather system slowly making its way towards him. This immediate sensation and feeling of the systems of weather moving and shifting around him, really put him in touch with a life force that was outside of his self. "For now being high up, and with the wind picking up, I truly feel alive." The following day his mood and feelings again seem to be influenced by the weather. "Today is overcast and snowing putting somewhat of a damper on my plans to go to Three Isle lake. Maybe it is because of the gloomy conditions but I don't feel like much of a ski today."

It seems like Dan felt a constant need to rationalize his decisions, there was an ever present tension between his wish to relax and his impulsion to be doing something. He was completely aware of this tension and recognized the need to slow down and enjoy fully what is. "My mind is in a constant rush, I've sat here writing now I want to be over there or up higher, I need to mellow out and enjoy the precious time before it is over." For a while he forgets himself and there is no tension, just Dan and the wind. "It's so quiet, myself and the wind."

EXPERIENCING SELF

Happiness is a theme that emerges as an important aspect of Dan's solo. Upon arrival at his solo site, he sits and thinks of the next three days ahead. "The feeling of happiness spread over me as I thought of the next three days and what I will do to satisfy myself. No one is around for miles and for now I'm happy and content where I am at."

In Dan's constant pursuit of experience, experiencing himself

to the full is also considered very important. During his solo, he became highly attuned to his inner world of thoughts, feelings, moods and needs. This inner world was one which normally he was rarely conscious of.

At the outset, Dan's whole being seemed to be almost obsessed with experiencing everything, often at the expense of not really allowing time to fully appreciate the value of certain things. Dan initially had a certain sort of impatience with himself, which he worked very consciously to cast off.

Initially, he did not fully understand his reasons for undertaking the solo. He saw it as he saw all challenges, to be met head on and conquered. "...I know how far I can push or motivate myself to conquer what is laid before me.." He was unaware initially that his time in solitude could offer him more than a challenge to be met and conquered in the name of ego gratification. "Right now for the hell of it, I do what I do for excitement, inner pleasure and personal satisfaction. If I can't benefit or have a purpose or goal for doing an activity or quest, then of course I don't do them." After the first day and night through the tranquillity and silence of solitude he has come to many important realizations.

Dan became aware of himself as part of a huge system and no longer saw himself as an isolated ego striving for hedonistic gratification. The more he became immersed in himself, the more attuned he became with his mood and viewed solitude as having a real value. "To become totally immersed in self I feel a longer duration is required. My mood has been varied, I'm going to sit back by the fire and relax, ponder some thoughts."

Dan's imagination plays an important role in bringing his experience to life and giving it more depth and meaning for him. "I

feel like an early explorer seeking wild places and discoveries wild and tame." He sees a mountain goat in the distance and imagines how it would feel to be such an animal. "Anything that can live at such high elevation is an animal which I would like to be re-incarnated as, what a cool life."

As Dan started to explore the rich potentials of solitude, he allowed more time for reflection. He thought a lot about his future and his desire to travel. "I sit here contemplating my future decisions and trying to get a focus, something obtainable in life."

Dan was sharply conscious of his isolation, he chose an area that was particularly isolated for his period of solitude. Even though he was very conscious of the remoteness of his spot, this for him did not imply loneliness, he felt very comfortable in his chosen state of aloneness. He almost saw it as a prefered way of life.

> Yes, I presently am isolated. I feel alone and comfortable. I feel alone and content about my whereabouts. The concept of aloneness rides over me and makes me feel comfortable, but at the same time many thoughts race through my mind as to how one could slowly become obsessed with being alone and drop out of society completely.

Dan believed firmly in following one's dreams and using experience as a guide, rather than being pushed into a routine set of experiences. He saw the societal view of solitude as being valueless and a burden "If everyone started off life experiencing what interested them instead of what is forced upon them, then being alone would be an integral part of life instead of a burden." He viewed solitude from many angles. For him, it was an opportunity to see himself as he really was, free from pressure or influence from

others.

Solitude had a freeing quality for Dan and made him feel very good about himself. "I feel truly alive and happy, alone but not lonely, conquering what many would fear to do. Something such as solo makes me feel very strong and content." His comment about feeling "truly alive" implies that there is not this feeling in moving through daily tasks, that there is perhaps a small death in the city and everyday life. Evening descends and Dan finds himself standing outside. "Tonight I stand outside gazing at the shadowy moon, listening....nothing is heard except the crunching of snow beneath my feet." The silence is confirming. Dan realized that this time for him was an experience rich in its potential for growth and calming his spirit to a level where the internal voices could audibly be heard above the external chatter.

DISCUSSION

As I look over the co-researchers protocols, in each one I see a very unique experience. There are however, threads of recurrent common themes that echo from one solitary experience to the next, and weave the fabric into an empathically generalizable human experience. Going through the wealth of material brought to me by each of the co-researchers, and acknowledging aspects of my own experience has been personally a very freeing and rewarding process. As we move through our lives and the experiences that we choose for ourselves, there is a realization that we are different from those close to us, but in our humaneness we have many things in common. Just as each life is a possible dialogue with the world and with self, each way to experience solitude is different. There is no instinctual way that man replies or responds in solitude. Each way to experience solitude is a possible way for it to be. It is a discussion of common aspects of solitude that follows.

THE FIRST STEPS/THE PATHWAY

Surrounded by walls, boxed in by tall buildings and tarmac roads, we have, through no other methods of escape, become victims of self forgetting, and lost sight of ourselves amongst the crowd. Each of the soloists went to a place of their choosing in the wilderness, for a period of three days and three nights. They went, having consciously made a decision to be alone in the wilderness, to learn more about themselves or to be renewed. "The anxiety has passed and it is time to be alone." Each of the co-researchers had their own reasons for going on a solo. Each had imagined how the time alone would be, and how they could grow and learn from it. Nicole commented, "when I catch myself confused, cramped and

thwarted, I return to the bush and all over again learn some new but basic truth." Upon arrival at his destination Dan wrote, "the feeling of happiness spread over me as I thought of the next three days and what I will do to satisfy myself.

The deeper problem of forgetting and covering up who we are can be revealed in solitude, I can no longer deceive myself now we are alone together. One co-researcher commented, "I am always discovering somethinghidden." This exemplifies the theme of solitude as a time of discovery of self, and a stripping away of superficialities.

SOLO - OPENING UP TO MYSELF AND THE WORLD

Solitude can become an overwhelming experience of one's own self presence, when all else can fall from the mind and one can become totally absorbed in one's own being. Time in solitude can be one of relaxed free emotions and deep insights. Solitude can then become a temple to help one master the art of changing loneliness into aloneness. Dan wrote, "I feel alive and happy, alone but not lonely, conqueringwhat many would fear to do...I feel alone and content about my whereabouts." It is a journey inward, a type of introversion. It is not an object, something outside but something that is one's very being.

So often in our lives, we are required to give up little pieces ourselves to be accepted by people, or required to adopt new modes of behaviour until one day we wake up, look in the mirror and realize we no longer really know who we are. With the multilayered relationships that we have with others and ourselves, it seems easy to push things aside, to repress them in the hope that they go away. If I am deafening myself to parts of myself then I am

"defended", I am no longer open and receptive to the world. If I block things, I am in conflict with myself, it becomes a struggle as energy is required to supress material, this saps the energy that I have for life. Tim was conscious of this theme throughout his period of solitude, " haven't been much good at slowing down the last couple of years I guess. Somehow with the stresses of work, relationships and everyday life, things can come temporarily off the rails."

A lot of the healing that occurs during solitude is in the attention that we give ourselves. In slowing down and listening to the inner world, there is an attunement to self that does not seem to exist in the noise and rush of daily life. This attention has energy in the form of love, awareness and consciousness. The more we pay attention to ourselves and become attuned with our very being, the closer one comes to the essence of our being, our authentic self that lies at the core beneath all the layers.

What I notice and learn about myself in solitude depends on what my needs are. If I know what I really want, then I am clearly focused and the chances of getting it or achieving it are greatly enhanced. Solitude is therefore, a self discovery. If I allow myself to relax fully then I become mentally and emotionally open to my inner processes. Solitude allows me to move full speed ahead into personal growth. When my mind stops chattering I can hear the internal music. Morgan (1986, p. 21) stated that

> genuine solitude is a coming to terms with silence and aloneness in life. It has an attitude of acceptance and welcoming about it. It is a 'turning towards' solitary stillness as a way of opening oneself up, as a way of coming-to oneself.

Throughout their periods of solitude the co-researchers seemed to be constantly in the process of self-monitoring, keeping track of moods and feelings, and the things that had influence upon them. Even though solitude helps to facilitate a process of increasing self knowledge and understanding, it does not take us to an end point where this process could ever be considered complete. Knowledge of self can never be complete because we are always changing in response to our environment.

MELANCHOLY AND SOLITUDE

The realization of our ultimate aloneness during solitude can be paralysing. There needs to be a willing acceptance of this existential fact if the experience is to be anything more than one of pain, blackness and inconsolable loneliness.

Feeling sad at certain times seems to be part of the experience of the person in solitude. This is a different type of sadness than that which plagues a person who, when faced with his/her ultimate aloneness, is unable to cope. The sadness should be welcomed and not ignored as it helps to give us and our experiences depth. Tim was conscious of his changing moods, " my mood has been varied, tired and low energy, so instead of fighting it...I'm going to sit back by the fire and relax, ponder some thoughts."

The emptiness that people so often talk about, sometimes referred to as loneliness, can not be filled by the company of people. This emptiness has to be filled by self. In order to do this one needs to connect with oneself at a level other than the superficial. Loneliness will disappear when one embraces self fully. The void is not lack of other people it is a lack of self. The feeling of loneliness seemed to disappear when there was a willing acceptance of one's

circumstances and a contentment with self. "No-one is around for miles and I'm happy and content where I'm at."

THE SPIRITUAL ASPECT OF SOLITUDE

Solitude has a spiritual and sacred quality about it. Spirituality in this context is a looking inward, it has nothing to do with religious doctrines telling us how to act, feel and behave. Zen and Taoism, two religions without doctrines are the most powerful as they allow room for the individual and personal growth. Powys (1974, p. 19) commented,

> the essence of the Tao seems to be that it is through withdrawing ourselves, rather than asserting ourselves, through retracting rather than pursuing, through inaction rather than action, through becoming quiet rather than making a stir, that we attain wisdom and spiritual power.

Powy's beliefs about solitude as a powerful tool for spiritual realization also state, "only when the soul is alone can the magic of the universe flow through it." Each of the co-reseqrchers felt the spiritual sides of themselves touched in solitude. Nicole commented on what this meant to her, " when I am in the wilderness and amoungst the wild creatures I feel closer to whatever Godsource exists. There is a divinity in all wild things, I like to think, and it's better than religion."

WILDERNESS AS A TEMPLE

The wilderness becomes a temple to which, from time to time we can retreat in silence and know that we will be accepted there. Our awareness and perceptions seem to change when we live close to

the earth, as it becomes more apparent that we are connected, we are part of a living breathing system.

If we truly want to feel the connection, we need to go unhindered and rid ourselves of the things that shield us from nature. We have to accept fully that we are part of the balance of nature, and if this is to be our temple, we can not deny our responsibility and impact. Kohak (1984, p. 81) wrote about how the being of humans is integrally linked to the being of nature.

> In the stillness of dusk a double order emerges. There is order of time, the all-reconciling rhythm of love and labour, of day and night, of the full moon and the starry skies of the new moon, the cycle of the seasons and the cycle of life, blossoming, renewing itself, and perishing. The great liberating discovery is that the human is not a stranger to it, that he has his integral place therein.

Nicole was acutely aware of her place in nature. Going into the wilderness was for her like visiting a temple, it had a sacred quality about it. A certain sense of happiness came from the simplicity of living close to nature. "If I want happiness I must look for simplicity. If I want wisdom I have only to satisfy those basic needs and then sit back and enjoy the Song of Life." The wilderness temple also at other timesstruck co-researchers with it's astounding beauty and magnificence. Nicole said, "my soul is free to wander in the woods and observe natures creations." Dan was also struck by the magnificence "taking a look around the night sky the beauty all around makes me feel good...I will miss this place." Sky too was touched by the beauty of the wilderness temple, "what a beautiful sunrise this morning, all blues and pink. It is such a pleasure ot open

your eyes and see the woods and the sky."

THE CONNECTION

In solitude the awareness of self as part of a larger system becomes heightened. There are many small discoveries. Often it is the silence and stillness that is deafening. In some strange way, it fills you and you can no longer see yourself as separate. A heart is beating inside you, trees and plants pulsate with the same force, there is no longer any distinction other than the physical bodies.

By consciously seeking solitude to integrate our beings with nature, some degree of meaning was found by each of the co-researchers. Listening to the wind moving through the trees, watching geese fly south, breathlessly standing in the darkness of early morning, waiting for the first glimpse of the sun and a new day, each person had a fundamental realization. Each person saw their relationship and undeniable connection to everything around them in unobscured clarity.

Nicole had a real need to feel that she was a part of the whole ecosystem. "I need to feel the living things around me. I build lean tos so I can better share the wilderness with the creatures in it." For Sky, her feelings of connection filled her with a certain sense of peacefulness. "I feel inner peace by the water, my soul dances upon the water and plays beneath the waves. I feel very good, very comfortable in my woods." Sky thought a great deal about man's relationship to the environment and tried to understand why his connection to it had become so frail. "Man has removed himself so far from nature that instead of feeling part of it, we feel like an intrusion upon it...love understanding and appreciation of the natural environment enhances man's love understanding and appreciation of

himself."

THE BALANCE

It is important for each individual to find their own unique balance of communion and solitude. It is a delicate balance this going within in order to give out. Morrison (1986) stated, "as intimacy with another person develops from being alone with that person, so does intimacy with oneself develop from spending time alone with oneself."

Through re-reading my own journals and those of the co-researchers, I confront myself again. By confronting solitude and aloneness, there has to be a willingness to move beyond the day to day self to a deeper level of self. Solitude can be a time of self confirmation, paradoxically, at the same time, it can be self forgetting.

In our crowded, noisy, busy society where we are overloaded with information and there is a lack of privacy and time for self. It becomes quietly obvious that we need to start viewing solitude as important from time to time, the alternative is too terrible to imagine.

By addressing the balance of communion and solitude we acknowledge that both of the states has its merits and its downfalls, both are important to human beings, but neither state exclusively would constitute a healthy lifestyle. Too much solitude could be destructive, however too little can cause a person to feel "confused, cramped and thwarted." There is no prescribed amount of solitude that a person should have. For some people a few hours alone is enough to allow them to feel renewed. Since each person has unique needs, only that person can really decide what is the best balance for

them. For Sky three days was not long enough, "the end is coming too soon...I have to do this again very soon." Similarly Dan felt that extending the period of solitude would better serve his needs, "to become totally immersed in self I feel a longer duration of time is required."

For Tim the realization of the impermanence of the period of solitude made it easier to enjoy. "I know this is a break and that makes it easier to enjoy, I don't think it would necessarily be the same if I knew I always had to live alone." In taking time away from their daily lives the co-researchers were able to see their lives with a fresh appreciation. Tim wrote, "I feel so fortunate to have come. The weather was great the place was wonderful. I have so much to be thankful for. I guess I'd just like to go home and appreciate those things and people."

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

The darkness during solitude seems to penetrate the soul. Darkness and light invite different moods, and alter perception. The balance of day and night, that one is so keenly aware of during solitude, brings a harmony of moods and thoughts. Dan wrote, "night, and with the approach of darkness my thoughts become more defined. The mood I have held the entire day is very strong at this point with ideas about my future more strong and descriptive." The darkness also brought some fear, "at times in the dark of the night I feel paranoid of being watched..", "the woods that bid me come explore this morning are not so familiar now, they seem foreboding as if inhabited by different creatures." Kohak (1984) was aware that humans have attempted to banish the rhythm of the day and night from their lives and become solely creatures of the day. In doing

this, he is conscious that we lose sight of our place in the universe.

> Surrounded by artifacts and constructs, we tend to lose sight, literally as well as metaphorically, of the rhythm of the day and night, of the phases of the moon and the change of the seasons, of the life in the cosmos and of our place therein. (Kohak, 1984, p.X).

Of dusk and solitude, Kohak commented, "the radical brackets of solitude at dusk bring out both the continuity and the divergence of speaking and being" (p. 51).

SILENCE/QUIET

The silence of solitude was very profound for the soloists. Often there are no words that describe the power of the awesome silence. In itself, it is at times deafening. The magnitude, of which can be experienced as a big black hole, a space devoid of any sound, was experienced as an area where one could almost fall into and be trapped. The power of the silence was experienced at times as intensely beautiful and at others as a bit frightening.

Merton (1973, p. 258) discussed the power of the silence of the woods, "the silence of the woods forces you to make a decision which the tensions and artificialities of society may help you to evade forever. Do you want to be yourself or don't you?" Through the silence we learned to listen to voices that cannot be heard with the ears. Often the silence was a meditation that allowed us to expand our vision. In the stillness of solitude, quietude of body and mind reaches in and touches us deeply. Kohak (1984) when discussing silence noted, "the great gift of silent evenings in a forest clearing is that they can dispel illusion" (p. 66). In this comment Kohak is alluding to the fact that in the silence of solitude there are no longer

any artificialities. It seems also that often our sense of hearing becomes dull in the daily task of filtering out so many distracting sounds. However in the wilderness thre is no longer any need to do this and the sense of hearing becomes fully alive and attuned. "Every now and then I stop to listen to the incredible silence. The crunch of the snow under my boots and the sound of my little stove appear deafening in contrast." Sky felt like the silence confirmed her solitude, "in the grey of the early morning all is quiet. Very quiet as if the world has gone to sleep and I am the only one awake." For Nicole the lack of sound started her on a process of reflecting about the sounds she enjoyed and found comforting. "I really miss the sound of the wind in the tree tops and the gentle rustling of the leaves."

BOREDOM

By losing touch of the present and allowing the mind to rush into other things, one loses the intensity of the moments of solitude. Often our minds may be wandering aimlessly over all the things that "should" be done rather than enjoying fully what is. This was not a particularly dominant theme. None the less there are hints of occassional feelings of boredom reflected in certain words for example, "wish I had a book."

At times the soloists experienced monotony, not knowing how to fill the hours constructively. Daily we are insulated from ourselves. We seem to be involved either consciously or unconsciously in a process of self forgetting. Our essence becomes buried deep under a complex network of friends, family, career and community. We fill our lives with "things" to keep us busy. For the co-researchers, the intensity of self alone was sometimes too

unbearable. Concerns of physical day to day existence need to be transcended in a natural unrestricted way in order to reach the doorway into self.

THE DOORWAY TO THE SELF

Patience, silence and a willingness to be open and receptive are all essential notions of solitude. Solitude, if approached in the right manner, has the potential to lead us to the doorway to the inside. It does not, however, take us through the door. This has to be a conscious decision. Nicole commented, "I do solo's because they allow me to get more in touch with me." As one stands motionless and breathing in front of the door, the invitation to self has often never been closer. Often there are locked doors. The people are closed and blocked, perhaps a mechanism of defence from years before, that may no longer serve a purpose. The system is incomplete. Energy for life and love does not move through locked doors. Morgan (1986) described this door or passage way as something that "connects us to the full human cosmic community, to the transcendent Mystery which surrounds all of life" (p, 22).

Tim experienced changes as a result of being open and receptive to himself, "I left an agitated person and am returning a peaceful and serene one. I'm feeling good and much more positive about life in general, this time almost feels like a cleansing for me. Feel much more in control of my emotional and mental health." Sky also had similar feelings, "I have grown in this time alone. It has reminded me of what little it takes to be happy."

THE SENSES

Solitude, if welcomed, can be a time of beautiful and exciting

sensory episodes. It is a time of heightened perceptual awareness. Each of the co-researchers senses seemed to come to life as they experienced a receptivity to the world that was more emphasized than in daily experience.

Perhaps in the peace and stillness of solitude, our senses are no longer bombarded with thousands of messages that we automatically filter out. Daily, our senses are overloaded to the point that they shut down and become numb, similar to psychological dimming as a defence mechanism. In solitude, they are no longer overcome with thousands of pieces of information that need to be filtered and shut out. Rather in the woods, in solitude, it suddenly seems like, for the first time, that one can hear the wind, watch the birds and smell the weather changing. This theme is echoed time and again in the words of the co-researchers. Tim noted that, "the smells of the woods permeate my nostrils.early morning, realizing its like a little city out there, squirrels chattering and birds singing." The senses brought in information that was pleasent and refreshing, often making the co-researcher feel less alone, and sometimes sparking the imagination. Nicole wrote, "the wind is very niosy and strong. It roars. It sounds like summer all over again with the swaying tree tops. Maybe it sounds like an ocean." Sky said."the first thing I noticed was the birdchatter. The birds are everywhere the woods are alive with them." Sky was aware of how the sensory information that she received was changing throughout the day, as evening draws in she writes, "no sound but he crackling of the fire and the hum of the lantern. The light is soothing to the soul." As darkness settles in Sky makes a realization about solitude and the night. "I'm very visual, I think as long as I can see I am not afraid."

WILLINGNESS

Willingness refers to the importance of solitude being self chosen. Each of the co-researchers was very aware that their experience of solitude would have been different had it not been self chosen. Tim eluded to the fact that his solitude was very enjoyable in light of two facts. Firstly, it was a state that he had chosen for himself and secondly, the knowledge of the impermanence of solitude, in that he knew that soon he would move to the other side of the balance and be with people. "I know this is a break and that makes it easier to enjoy, I don't think it would necessarily be the same if I knew I always had to live alone."

Willingness arose as a very important issue. The co-researchers became aware of the implications of being forced into solitude and saw this as a very painful event, that would turn the meaning of the experience around drastically. As is the case of solitary confinement, this enforced solitude is often still used as one of the more crippling forms of punishment in prisons today. All co-researchers felt a continuing need for self improvement. Sky commented "I feel so good here. How you feel about where you are is very important." Unlike some people in isolation for long periods of time who lose the drive to improve self and who cease to care about anything, then eventually lose the will to live. Dan commented "I feel alive and happy, alone but not lonely, conquering what many would fear to do. Something such as a solo makes me feel very strong and content."

TIME

In our daily lives, "now" seems so passing and impermanent that one constantly lives in reference to the past or some future plan

or event. Solo slows the passage of time so that the person can live more in the here and now and be more fully conscious of each moment.

Often in this mode, the co-researchers reported finding enjoyment and pleasure in simple day to day tasks, that ordinarily may be done without being fully conscious.

In moving towards nature and going to live there for a period of time, there is an invitation to leave all human constructs behind. They are no longer needed in this place. Though the ecosystems are complex, there is a simplicity in the woods that is better served by one who enters free from the chains that ordinarily bind humans. This includes giving up clock imposed time. In the woods time does not follow this order; it takes on a different meaning. Hard for the one who wears a watch to understand. Sky wrote, "in the woods time slows down,becomes fluid, my thoughts become fluid also." Taking a clock during a period of solitude would subordinate natural rhythms and attempt to order them when there is no need. Kohak discussed time, (1984, p. 17) "the construct becomes problematic when we apply it beyond the scope of its original intent." Increased awareness of natural time is possible in solitude, when one allows the inner rhythms to drift with those of nature. This means getting up when one feels rested, eating when hungry, sleeping when tired, it is a very simple rhythm to follow, nothing is dictated by an arbitrary number on a small round face.

In solitude, the co-researchers were able to reflect on the structure of everyday lived experience. For each, there was a change in time perception as they were free from obligation, and were not assigned to any external schedule. Dan noticed that "since the watch is back at the van time has no meaning, just another way of

relieving the stress of our everyday lives. Time moves slow in some ways..."

Spontaneity and creativity, removed from the rigid structure of daily living, are able to flourish. Spontaneity was a common experience. Generally as nothing rigid was planned by each person, "I feel like doing this" thoughts were followed by the action. There was contentment in doing what one felt like doing, rather than what one ought to do.

Through their brief periods of solitude, each of the co-researchers came to see clearly their own, and societal absorption and pre-occupation with time. Tim was particularly conscious of this, "time is another consideration even though I do not have a watch, time is constantly on my mind. About four hours until sunset or it's about seven am, time to get up. The experience of the solo has slowed down the clock to only things of grave importance." They each came to realize that we need not be wholly enclosed in time. In the green depth of a forest clearing, staring out over a vast expanse of snow covered mountains, standing under the moon and stars or staring into the flames of a fire, each one came to realize that we can encounter the eternal flow of time, and let our lives themselves become timeless, this each discovered is a healthier alternative.

CHAPTER VI:
GENERAL DISCUSSION
THE NEED FOR QUALITATIVELY ORIENTED RESEARCH

Phenomenological research still appears to be in its infancy in the Western world. Studies rooted in phenomenology are sometimes still regarded apprehensively, and perhaps not always taken as seriously as quantitative research. As the present study has demonstrated, this apprehension is unfounded. Phenomenology allows meaning to surface in human experiences. Existential phenomenology wants to attend to those dimensions of experience that are an inherent part of everyday human life (Allport, 1955).

Any human being's experiencing of their phenomenal world is very complex. Therefore, studies of these phenomenal experiences add greatly to the depth of our understandings of human experiences. No accurate depthful understanding of human experience is possible if the explanations are limited to categorical definitions. By viewing empathy and introspection as valuable approaches to researching human experience, a clearer understanding of ourselves will emerge.

For this type of human science research to be useful, it seems important to be able to translate the findings into some humanly practical value. A natural scientific study of a phenomenon such as wilderness solitude, would have little to offer professionals who meet their clients at an experiential level. This thesis has attempted, at the very least, to highlight the benefits of an experience of wilderness solitude in the context of a therapeutic outdoor experience.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

To date, there is very little qualitative research on the phenomenon and therapeutic benefits of wilderness solitude. The possibilities for further phenomenological research are infinite. There are, needless to say, many aspects left to explore that could add further depth to our understanding of this complex phenomenon. Even to replicate similar studies will render a multi-perspectival view of the phenomenon. Further studies using different descriptive methods and different data may show whether the common themes of wilderness solitude identified here are structures that extend beyond the participants in this study. If bracketing and researcher bias is adequately addressed, then further studies should yield quite similar results.

POSSIBLE SHORTCOMINGS

It would be extremely difficult to elicit a description of human experience that has not overlooked something. I do not intend this as an excuse, but rather to emphasize the differences among how humans experience a similar event. I have attempted to do justice to a potentially powerful and rewarding human experience. The value of the phenomenological approach rests in its attitude of openness and receptivity to whatever may emerge. This attitude may, however, be viewed as a shortcoming by many. This study is not grounded in quantities that can readily be disputed, but rather in qualities that attempt to reach the core of what it means to be human. A justifiable criticism of the study could therefore, be that this core has not been fully exposed. It is not however, within the capacity of this thesis to undertake such a task.

IMPACT OF THE RESEARCH, SOME FINAL COMMENTS

It is not too surprising that the research in which one is integrally involved will eventually have some sort of psychological impact upon the researcher. Throughout the process of doing this research, I have witnessed many interesting discoveries about myself. As stated in the introduction, due to the nature of my research I anticipated becoming intimately bound with it. Not only this, but it had a psychological impact upon me. It became a co-constitutional relationship, me impacting the research, and the research impacting me. I also started to examine if there was a deeper psychological reason that I was perhaps not conscious of, as to why I had chosen phenomenology as my method. It is in part, my belief, that this method was selected due to the relationship it brings me with the co-researchers. It brings a closeness and a sharing between individuals in a trusting environment. This method seems to compliment the feelings felt in solo, emphasizing the importance of finding a balance of communion and solitude. Further reflection revealed to me that my topic and my chosen methodology in fact represent the two poles that exist within human beings, and the reason for my research is stimulated by my unconscious need to find the balance point between these two poles. I seemed to move from long periods of isolation when reading and writing about solitude, to times where I craved the company of other human beings. The loneliness of writing about solitude haunted me at times. This dialectic of solitude and communion, reunion and separation seemed to be a pattern throughout the articulation process, as I would spend days in the company of myself writing. It was during these times that my understandings of the experience of solitude were deepened. I came to appreciate the real need to find a balance, that solitude and

communion, both equally important do not exist fully and meaningfully without each other. If I am, as I believe undeniably connected to the earth and all that move within her, then if I were to remove myself from these contacts, life would cease to have the meaning that I have assigned it today. Also through the phenomenological method, I have noticed at times that the co-researchers have become more important than the research itself, this communion with people is also a fundamental need of human beings.

CONCLUSIONS

This project could be utilized as the first step in developing a comprehensive program of therapeutic experiences. It may be of use for outdoor educators, counsellors and other professionals interested in using the outdoors as an accepting environment for counselling and directing personal growth experiences for clients.

This thesis attempts to illustrate the value of solitude and the potential it has as a tool for personal growth and self discovery. This experience can be incorporated into a longer duration outdoor experience as a valuable compliment to group process. Although a period of solitude exists in a standard Outward Bound course, I am not entirely sure its value and importance is understood and emphasized. This research may therefore help to guide leaders to understand some of the emotions and experiences that students may have, when facilitating a period of solitude.

By looking at the common themes we can learn something about the nature of human beings, and the importance of their relationship to the natural environment. The emerging themes also elude to the potential that solitude has for therapy and healing.

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APPENDIX I

SKY, THEMATIC ANALYSIS FROM ORIGINAL PROTOCOL

First evening - Tuesday, December 18th

1. Anxiety has passed and it is time to be alone.
2. Differentiates alone from lonely.
3. Reference to the quietness, except the crackling of the fire.
4. Reference to sound.
5. Peacefulness.
6. No threats.
7. Darkness has fallen outside.
8. Inside there is warmth near the fire.
9. Feeling of safety from the unknown.
10. "Hiding from something perhaps?"
11. "The stars are out."

Day one - Wednesday, December 19th

1. Early morning is quiet.
2. Very quiet.
3. Feels like she is the only one in the world who is awake.
4. Humour, burnt holes in socks.
5. A day of unwinding lies ahead.
6. Finds it difficult to do.
7. Finds it hard to adjust to not needing to be responsible for something or having to rush somewhere at a certain time-feels guilty.
8. Sits and sews, imagines herself to be in the past.
9. Thinks about the hierarchy of basic needs.
10. Finds it unusual to be out of touch with clock time.
11. Follows moose tracks.
12. The sun is out and the sky is blue, it makes everything fine.
13. Sees no animals, but there are lots of signs, there is the occasional chattering of chikadee-disappointment.
14. Feels very good and comfortable.
15. Takes ownership of place, "in my woods."
16. Reflects on how she needs to see, in seeing there is no fear.
17. Light and warmth of sunshine is soothing to the soul.
18. Dark again.
19. Lights lantern in order to see, but it prevents her from seeing outside so sheturns it out.

20. The woods that were familiar and inviting in daylight are now less familiar, inhabited by different creatures.
21. Things look different, eerie at night.
22. Frightening lack of sound.
23. Mind races from one thought to the next.
24. Fights sleep for fear of losing herself in the night.
25. Night feels long, mind wanders to issues supressed deep within-childhood fears, previous out-of-body experience.
26. Feels like she is being drawn into dealing with things.
27. Realization of how man has removed himself from nature, and now no longer part of it, is an intrusion upon it.
28. Does not remember the last time she saw so many stars. There is no longer any fear the stars remind her of home-childhood memory of all the stars at home, there is comfort in familiarity.

Day two - Thursday, December 20th

1. Discovery, finds a spot by the river.
2. Thoughts about creativity and water.
3. Feels very free beside the water, becomes philosophical.
4. Thinks about life and the direction of her's.
5. Knows that she is on the right road but taking too many detours impatience to move back to nature and out of the city.
6. Uses house on the water as a metaphor for life and contentment.
7. Skis, gliding on top of the snow makes her feel free from constraints, sense of freedom in a long gliding movement, sense of fulfilment and well being that comes from exercise.
8. Notices difference in temperature from yesterday.
9. Notices lack of bird sound.
10. The end of the solo seems to be approaching too soon.
11. Is just starting to relax and feel at one with self and nature.
12. Recognizes the need to repeat the experience again soon.
13. Thinks of friends and wonders what they are doing, and whether their paths will cross again.
14. The sun is slowly sinking, she has a great view.
15. Spent too much time lighting fires.
16. Feels good there.
17. How you feel about where you are is very important.
18. Met another person, felt like an intrusion upon her special time.
19. The experience is turning out differently than imagined, "that's good."

20. Had it been a survival experience it would have been very different.
21. Contemplates how man is against nature rather than part of nature.
22. Agrees that an outdoor solo in this temperature, -30 degrees centigrade would be very different.
23. Sky has grown in this time alone.
24. She has been reminded of what little it takes to be happy.
25. Warm is good.
26. Having a stove to cook food is better.
27. Herb tea and a view of the woods is great.
28. To conquer fears you must first realize what they are.
29. Walks in the woods at night and hears an owl, overcomes fear of the woods at night.
30. Is not finding complete attunement with her biological clock.
31. Eats when hungry but, stays in bed because it is warmer when she would prefer to be getting up.

Day three - Friday, December 21st

1. "What a beautiful sunrise this morning."
2. It is a pleasure to open eyes to the woods and sky.
3. Notices how it is very cold in the mornings.
4. A chickadee was her first visitor, a good feeling.
5. Has not been lonely or wanted the company of anyone for the past three days.
6. Attunement with nature would be easier if it were not so cold.
7. "Winter can be harsh and unforgiving."
8. Philosophical thought about love for environment and how it enhances love for self.

APPENDIX II

TIM, THEMATIC ANALYSIS FROM ORIGINAL PROTOCOL

Day 1 - Wednesday, January 16th

1. Packing and travelling to solo site at Bear lake.
2. Meets with Mors, gratitude for his time and help.
3. Walk together to camp, soon Tim is alone - "the solo begins...."
4. Reflection on pace of life and lack of time to dwell on things.
5. Remembers last night thinking and talking about solo with friends.
6. Realization of how long the nights would be.
7. Looking foreword to adventure, curiosity.
8. Reflecting on how his involvement in the study came about.
9. Barriers to doing solo.
10. Emotional well-being would have been main barrier.
11. Reflection and explanation of break-up of long term relationship.
12. Hopes for the future, to have a family.
13. Questions decision to end relationship.
14. Hope that solo will allow him to answer his deepest questions.
15. Another barrier to doing a solo would be finding time from "my hectic pace."
16. Shortly after our first meeting Tim knew that he would do a solo.
17. Need to meet the challenge to feel at peace with self.
18. "I guess I knew I would go." End of reflection.
19. Makes a second trip to his van to bring in supplies.
20. Spends time chopping wood and setting up camp before dark.
21. Listens to the incredible silence, (sparks a memory).
22. Attunement to small sounds that appear deafening in contrast to the pervading silence.
23. Walks on the lake as darkness falls, then goes into shelter.
24. Description of shelter, no doubts that it will be a comforting place.
25. "In some ways I fear going home."
26. "With the world on the brink of war this is almost an escape for me."
27. Philosophical thought about nature's simplicity and man's ignorance.
28. An aching for the innocent people suffering due to the Gulf conflict.
29. Thoughts about war, frustration and feelings of helplessness

weigh heavily.
30. Has recently taken to avoiding reading newspapers and watching news.
31. Longs for return of his positive happy attitude.
32. Appreciates people, but also believes that we are a cruel destructive species.
33. Belief that all people are basically good.
34. Between writing goes out to see the pitch black sky studded with stars, lantern light makes shelter look inviting.
35. Feels better now than he has felt in a long time.
36. Realizes that he will miss the place.
37. Goes to collect more wood, "...my little stove seems to devour the stuff." Personification of objects.
38. Very warm and comfortable.
39. Pleased at decision to come while weather is fair.
40. Misses guitar that is in the van, makes decision to get it tomorrow.
41. Dinner cooks, Tim feels at peace, a little sad but, "so much better than I've felt lately."
42. The night sky and surrounding beauty promotes a good feeling.
43. "Perhaps there is a purpose, a reason for all this."
44. Standing under the stars it all seems too complex and wonderful to happen without a reason.
45. Will not ever fully understand man's or his part in this world, but.realizes that he does not have to know, "I'll wonder occasionally, but I'm sure its unravelling the way it should and I don't need to worry."

Day Two - Wednesday, January 17th
1. "Weather is still beautiful."
2. Time loses meaning, leaving watch behind helps to relieve stress.
3. Things that normally are inconsequential are now important. Boils water for breakfast.
4. Short walk - solitude is found at the lake and slows him down.
5. Enjoyment of this time alone, realizes that it would be different if he knew he always had to be alone. It is the knowledge of the impermanence of this kind of solitude that makes it so refreshing.It is a self chosen solitude.
6. Goes for two long walks - takes photographs.
7. Finds a new camp-site for the third night.
8. Skis for physical exercise.

9. Notices how chain of lakes is covered with ski-doo tracks.
10. Is trying to improve technique.
11. Feels good planning future opportunities to practice and improve.
12. In the distance sees people fishing.
13. Turns away from the people.
14. Resents them being there, invasion of personal space.
15. "I feel no desire to see anyone." Contentment with solitude.
16. Time moves slowly, he counts it until the end of the solo.
17. Walks again, this time to see the animal tracks and birds.
18. Feels the warm breeze on his face, gratitude for the warm spring like weather.
19. "The smells of the woods permeate my nostrils." Makes reference also to the smells of the left over fire and melting snow.
20. Goes to cut some wood for evening.
21. After wood cutting, goes for a ski, then to watch the sunset.
22. Skied to where he saw the fishermen earlier will use their fishing holes to get water.
23. Returns to shelter for a short sleep, tired.
24. Lights stove and lantern in preparation for the approaching evening.
25. Appreciation of hut, belief that he could stay a long time if he had someone he cared about as a companion.
26. Thinks a little about the Persian Gulf crisis.
27. Hopes all is well there.
28. Realizes how precious the water is.
29. Feels good and positive, solo is like a cleansing.
30. Feels more in control emotionally and mentally.
31. Almost wishes solo was over so he could get on with things.
32. Reflection to the last few years, realizes that he has not slowed down.
33. Plays guitar by the fire, feels tired and content.
34. Re-writes will, not a morose time, needed to be done.
35. Attunement to sounds.
36. Whistle from trains reminds him of a past experience.
37. Asks self, "how do I feel now?"
38. Bored wishes for a book.
39. Frustration.
40. Cooks dinner and plays more guitar.
41. Stokes the stove so it will burn into the evening.

42. Concluding statement, "day two almost over."

Day Three - Friday, January 18th

1. Realization that the wilds are like a little community, "squirrels chattering, birds singing."
2. Thinks of all the little creatures going about their business, "and soon it is quiet except for the wind in the trees."
3. Time to get on with the day after lying and pondering for a while.
4. After breakfast involves self with moving things to new camp-site.
5. Leaving the old camp-site is a sad affair.
6. The place has quickly become home, reluctance to move camp.
7. "In some ways I'm wishing the time was up."
8. Description of the wind blowing and its strength.
9. Enjoys writing, putting feelings onto paper is like having someone to talk to.
10. Cold wind blowing outside, decides to build a fire, sit inside and play guitar for a while.
11. After leaving first camp never goes back.
12. Took a lot of work to move camp, more than expected.
13. Deep snow makes walking and hauling gear hard work.
14. Finds a beautiful spot on a hill on the lakeshore to set up.
15. In retrospect leaving was difficult but Tim is elated with his new camp, "it is so beautiful and serene."
16. Breaks axe but spirits do not fall.
17. Wishes he was staying longer in the new place.
18. Makes dinner and builds a fire.
19. Wind is still howling.
20. Sits by the fire until only the embers remain, writing.
21. Curious as to the goings on in the outside world.
22. Realization that it does not matter in the woods.
23. Speculates about how Hussein and Bush should do a solo.
24. Feels fortunate to have done a solo.
25. Appreciation of weather and place whilst on solo.
26. Reflection on differences in temperament and mood since doing solos.
27. Wonders how long the change and peaceful feeling will last.
28. Has always had a carefree positive attitude on life.
29. Belief that things will always work out as they should.
30. With small daily stresses mounting up, sees that things can come, "temporarily off the rails."
31. Solo has been a time to get things in perspective.

32. Realization that he has much to be thankful for.
33. Will return home with a greater appreciation for life and people.

APPENDIX III

NICOLE, THEMATIC ANALYSIS FROM ORIGINAL PROTOCOL

Pre solo - January 15th.

In response to the question, "Why do you do solo's ?".

1. Getting in touch with self.
2. Time slows down.
3. Flowing of thoughts.
4. Attunement to senses.
5. Satisfaction of basic needs.
6. Listening to the song of life.
7. Feeling the closeness of other living things.
8. Reflecting back to inner world.
9. Conversation remembered - mysticism.
10. Thoughts on Karmic levels.
11. No place for druids in cities.
12. Feelings of contentment after solo.
13. Solo brings a sense of what is important for self.
14. Solo helps to re-learn, re-charge and return to the truth.
15. Happiness through simplicity.
16. Wisdom through satisfaction of basic needs.
17. Reliance upon inner resources.
18. Discovery of things hidden.
19. Confidence builder.
20. Fear of inflexibility with old age.
21. Newness of world.

Pre solo expectations - January 15th.

1. Notices darkness comes early.
2. Realization of shortness of daylight hours.
3. Challenge of winter camping.
4. Dislike of extreme cold.
5. Cooler temperatures help to clear the mind.
6. Looking forward to challenge ahead.
7. Looking forward to studying nature.
8. Wondering where the ants go at this time of year.
9. Wondering where the birds and deer will be.
10. Excitement.
11. Excitement and looking forward.
12. Drawing similarities to past experiences.

13. Reflection on past experience.
14. Anxiety about tools, realization of dependence on fire for warmth etc.
15. Wish to go un-cluttered.
16. Demanding more of self.
17. Happy anticipation.
18. Re-union with self.
19. Appreciation of value of good weather.
20. Whole-hearted appreciation, gaining confidence.
21. Questioning feeling.
22. No reservations.
23. Closeness to Godsource.
24. Belief in divinity in all wild things.
25. Comparison to religion.

Day one - Wednesday, January 16th.

1. Appreciation.
2. Proud description of camp set up.
3. Hears train, leads to a feeling of (4).
4. Sadness and regret, realization that there is no real wilderness.
5. Notices birdchatter.
6. Wish to be able to identify more birds.
7. Surprise.
8. Discussion of animal evidence around camp.
9. Gratitude for brightness of the sun.
10. Notices lack of smell in winter.
11. Further reference to lack of smell.
12. Observation of animal tracks.
13. Surprise at abundance of life around.
14. Comparison to summer.
15. Recognition of a problem - staying warm.
16. Misses the sound of the wind.
17. Description of wind sound in trees.
18. Feelings of tiredness and peace.
19. Wishing for a distraction.
20. Fire ritual.
21. Gratitude.
22. Frustration.
23. Noticing sounds of birds.
24. Change in time perception.
25. Realization of reliance upon clocks.

26. Reference to how sun is different in the winter.
27. Notices wildlife.

Day two - Thursday, January 17th.

1. Dusk is favourite time.
2. Reference to sound - coyotes, "eerie chorus".
3. Thinking back to a past incident.
4. Fear.
5. Preparation for an attack.
6. Sleep.
7. Woken by noise - fear.
8. Vivid dreams.
9. Wakes up, imagines, fantasizes.
10. Fear.
11. Wish to share the wilderness with other creatures.
12. Visit from a bird.
13. Reference to squirrel talk.
14. Sleeps only for a few hours during the night.
15. Reference to cold.
16. Description of morning.
17. Walk to explore nature.
18. Description of day and sun.
19. Feelings of guilt, not really enjoying the experience.
20. Reflection to past.
21. Lack of enthusiasm or motivation to do much.
22. Anger at self.
23. Checker tells her about war.
24. Feelings of anger from intrusion.
25. Wilderness as a protector from the outside world.
26. Dis-attachement from outside world.
27. Puts things in perspective.
28. Questions actions of other people.
29. Feeling of chosen detachment from outside world.
30. Mocks media insensitivities - humour.
31. Reflection to past - work.
32. Reflection to past - references to sounds.
33. Excitement as she remembers sounds. "But the wolves! Oh, they grabbed me in my throat and made me want to cry for the beauty of it".
34. Continued reminiscence about the wolves and their captive life.
35. Understanding, sympathizing with their anger.

36. Realization of the injustice to the animals.
37. Continues to reflect vividly.
38. Returns to daily tasks.
39. Looks at position of sun to estimate time of day.
40. Feeling shaky and light headed.
41. Attention to physical feeling - warmth.
42. Reflection to past.
43. Respect for animals.
44. Fear of man.
45. Remembering past experience.
46. Noticing birds everywhere.
47. Getting to know the creatures personally.
48. Present events spark memory.
49. Detailed description of a remembered event.
50. Linking past events to present day beliefs .
51. Discussion about beliefs.
52. Searches for animal life around camp.
53. Enjoyment of solitude and exploration.
54. Appreciation of birds, "They make me smile."
55. Wish to see more nature.
56. Description of noise.
57. Assessment and thought on present life situation.
58. Increasing clarity as to what she wants to do in the future.
59. Recognizes future goal.
60. Fantasizing, admission of deep down wishes.
61. Notices spider.
62. Looking forward to coming.
63. Constant dialogue like a conversation.
64. Question to someone.
65. Appreciation of gifts from nature.
66. Reference to shamanism.
67. Secret about past.
68. Realization that in the bush thoughts are sexless.
69. Lack of distinction between males and females, just humankind.
70. Attempts to fully understand thought.
71. Break from reflective mode, returns to the here and now.
72. Pride in her outdoor skills, lights a fire, melts snow for water.
73. Honesty with self.
74. Reference to sounds.
75. Notices wildlife.
76. Caring for nature.

77. Compassion for fellow animals and insects.
78. Contentment.
79. Attention to small details.
80. Excitement with small things.
81. More excitement from simple things.
82. Gratitude for small things.
83. Attention to the positive side of things.
84. Appreciation of fire.
85. Wishes for a book to read.
86. Looking forward to a future event.
87. Notices birds wonder what they are.
88. Blah, tea has ashes in it. Frustration.
89. Appreciation.
90. Planning future activities.
91. Reference to sound - train.
92. Learning something new through experience.
93. Concern for animals.
94. Reference to sky.
95. Opinion about fires.
96. Care and concern for environment.
97. Thinking about place upon her leaving.
98. Wondering how the natives survived outdoors.
99. Meditation.

Day three - Friday, January 18th.

1. Happiness.
2. Realization that it is rare to wake up smiling.
3. Description of wind.
4. Appreciation and love for wind.
5. Woke up during the night to see a clear star filled sky appreciation.
6. Physical comfort.
7. Learns from experience.
8. Walks.
9. Listens to sounds of the wind - comparison to ocean sounds.
10. Meditation.
11. Watches weather coming in.
12. Makes a decision about evening.
13. Concern for animals.
14. Caring about environment.
15. Appreciation.

16. Description and thanks for the day's weather.
17. Walks to see the sun better.
18. Notices in detail the physical appearance of a place.
19. Attention to details, attention to daily existence.
20. Appreciation of beauty.
21. Notices abundance of animal tracks.
22. Humour.
23. Lightness and darkness, a comparison from hills to valley.
24. Wind is unbelievable.
25. Snow.
26. Coyotes.
27. Meditation.
28. Sees a mouse - pleasure.
29. Appreciation of beauty.
30. Reflects critically on own behaviour.
31. Description of mouse.
32. Reward.
33. Appreciation of beauty.
34. Understanding how the animals move.
35. Gratitude.
36. Connects meditation to seeing animals.
37. Want to feel like the first person to ever be there.
38. Looks at sun position to estimate daylight hours left.
39. Imagines leaving place - feels sad.
40. In depth description of place, implies that it is close to her.
41. Strong wish not to communicate with outsiders during solo experience.
42. Disappointment after intrusion.
43. Sitting in sunlight, warmth, thoughts flow.
44. Writes a note as though we are in conversation.
45. Notices length of night and length of time in darkness.
46. Anticipation of sunrise.
47. Breaking camp is a happy joyous occasion.
48. Final description of temperature and wind.

APPENDIX IV

DAN, THEMATIC ANALYSIS FROM ORIGINAL PROTOCOL

Day one - Friday, March 22nd.

1. Beginning of a journey, description of location.
2. Remoteness and isolation, description of area chosen for solo.
3. Recognition of isolation.
4. Feelings of confidence, that others may envy his position.
5. Skis and sees not a soul - realization of complete isolation.
6. Decent in white out conditions, real challenge when alone.
7. Feeling of happiness spreads over him as he thinks of the three days solo ahead.
8. Mountain tops disappear in the white out, the weather worsens so does his mood.
9. Feelings of caution.
10. Looses self in trance of thought about past and future.
11. Isolation and fear of accidents.
12. Takes hold of the situation and prevents mind from weaving intricate fantasies, slowly builds more confidence.
13. Becomes pre-occupied by "what if?" questions relating to safety and accidents.
14. Sits down close to destination for solo, feels the elements on his face and ponders.
15. Questions self, "why the hell am I in such a rush to do everything?" Annoyance at his own impatience.
16. Blocks out distracting thoughts and focuses on nature and the rocks that surround him.
17. "The sun began beaming through the clouds and the before non-existent mountains began to sprout up all around." Description of nature, it seems to make poets and philosophers out of us.
18. Description of feelings, "I felt alone and comfortable."
19. Imagination. "Like an early explorer, seeking new places and discoveries, wild and tame."
20. Mood mellows, finishes ski to destination.
21. Washes and laughs at the smell of five day old shirt.
22. Feels alone and content in isolation.
23. Description of nature. "It's snowing outside and the sun is trying hard to enter the windows of the cabin."
24. Decides to sleep.
25. Tiredness, reflects on day's activities.

26. Night has fallen, already there is an attachment to place, "my cabin". Description of fire, it is the only company. Implies and confirms solitude.
27. Goes to look at the stars, it is overcast but notices the light and glare from the moon.
28. Starts to think about the concept of aloneness, the idea takes over his whole being makes him feel comfortable.
29. Simultaneously thoughts of becoming obsessed with being alone and dropping out of society rush his mind.
30. Recognition that, "humans need other humans to support them."
31. Dismisses above statement, expresses a belief that, "everyone should start out life experiencing what interests them instead of what is forced upon them, then being alone would be an integral part of life instead of a burden."
32. Feels good about self on solo.
33. Good feeling originates from setting out to accomplish a goal and meeting a challenge.
34. Is able to see his actions clearly when not under pressure or influence from others.
35. Identifies a need to be busy and doing things in order to feel good about self.
36. Decides to sleep by the warmth of the fire so that he can get a good sleep and have energy for tomorrow.
37. Thinks about lightness and darkness.
38. Darkness restricts his activity, a long night ski.
39. Would go out without question if he had company. This ties into his initial concerns about safety and isolation.
40. Philosophy of hope and expectations.
41. In the darkness a fear of the unknown and a feeling of being watched arises.
42. Sarcasm about having good thoughts before sleeping.

<u>Day two - Saturday, March 23rd.</u>

1. The sunshine wakes him after a long sleep.
2. Notices the quiet, likes the fact that nothing will bother him.
3. Realizes that he has slept a lot lately, justifies it.
4. Description of nature.
5. Sees the weather moving in from the west.
6. Ski trip then a rock scramble.
7. Gets a fright as he realizes how high he has climbed.
8. Climbs down and thinks about if he were to fall.

9. Looks back, thinks perhaps he is over cautious.
10. Looks into the distance and sees a dead animal, the more he stares the more clear it becomes. He creates a scenario as to how it got there.
11. Thinks it is a boulder, looks at all the evidence.
12. More thoughts as to whether its an animal or a boulder.
13. Decides that tomorrow he will go and satisfy his curiosity.
14. Thinks about the possibility of sheep and goats knocking rocks onto his head from above.
15. Sees goat tracks and follows them as far as they go with his eyes.
16. Would like to be re-incarnated as an animal that can live at high elevations. Likes the idea of such a life.
17. Disbelief at the amount of time he slept. Sees it as a waste as he sits andtakes in the scenery and the sunshine.
18. Realizes that most of the day is over and soon he will face the decision again as to whether to go out and ski at night or not.
19. Being up high and sitting in wind he feels, "truly alive".
20. Thinks about statement that, rock climbers, in order to feel alive need to feel death close at hand.
21. Admits that he has this need.
22. "I feel alive and happy, alone but not lonely, conquering what many would fear to do." There is pride in having accomplished a challenge.
23. "The, the great white north." Appreciation for place and detachment from civilization.
24. Draws the view that is in front of him.
25. Makes a joke about his drawing saying that he never had the talent.
26. Looks over and sees a glacier that he climbed a few days ago. In the shadows it looks steep and awe inspiring, "a total freak show."
27. Becomes conscious of mind rushing. Recognizes the need to mellow and enjoy the precious time before it is over.
28. Notices the quiet, just Tim and the wind. Alone with just the elements.
29. Walks then returns to the rock ridge, decides to write again.
30. Solo makes him feel very strong and confident.
31. He wonders who else would be in a similar situation. Inside he is happy where he is, there is a certain sense of pride as there are very few who would do the same.
32. Statement about why he does what he does, "...excitement, inner

pleasure and personal satisfaction."
33. Belief that life should be rich in many different ways and not a routine set of them.
34. Feels a need to experience everything he can get his hands on.
35. Not just physical but mental challenges too. Recognition of a need and desire to stretch self.
36. Discovery of inner drives.
37. Needs to find benefits or have a purpose or goals in things. Only wanting to do that which is worthwhile.
38. Night falls, "With the approach of darkness my thoughts become more clearly defined."
39. Strength of mood felt throughout the day continues and he starts to feel more creative.
40. Mentions desire to travel and knows that due to the way he is he will do itwithin the next short while.

Day three - Sunday, March 24th.
1. Weather overcast.
2. Weather affects mood and plans.
3. Reoccurring thoughts about what needs to be done back in the "real world".
4. Awareness.
5. Has no watch but seems preoccupied with time.
6. Example of preoccupation.
7. Today he decides to forget the nagging in his brain and do what he really feels like rather than what he feels he ought to.
8. Mood is varied, tired and low on energy. Decides to relax by the fire, time to think.
9. The sun is out. Goes to cut wood.
10. The woodshed has been buried with snow, nature changing things.
11. Splits logs, pride in accomplishment.
12. Does dishes, almost compulsively needs to be productive.
13. Practices harness tying in methods.
14. Puts out water to freeze so he can make a window for the igloo structure.
15. Craves transcendence.
16. Contemplates future and tries to focus.
17."Something obtainable in life."
18. Solo has slowed time to let him focus on what is important.
19. Stands outside alone with the moon, there is silence except the

noise of snow underfoot.
20. No fear, he is happy and content for now.
21. Solo passed quickly with it he learned more about his inner self.
22. To become totally immersed in self would need a longer period of time and a warmer climate.
23. Needs a shower.
24. Thinks about tomorrow.
25. New snow will make high possibility of avalanches.
26. A good day.

Day four departure day.

1. Stands below the glacier sweating and scared.
2. White out and has lost sight of markers due to new snow.
3. Can see nothing, the snow conditions are very poor.
4. Worries about being alone in such conditions.
5. Realizes that he would be in serious trouble if it avalanched now.
6. Freaks out.
7. Starts to write again once on safe ground.
8. Looks back on ski out, had fun would do it again. In retrospect, things always look good.
9. Was spontaneous during solo.